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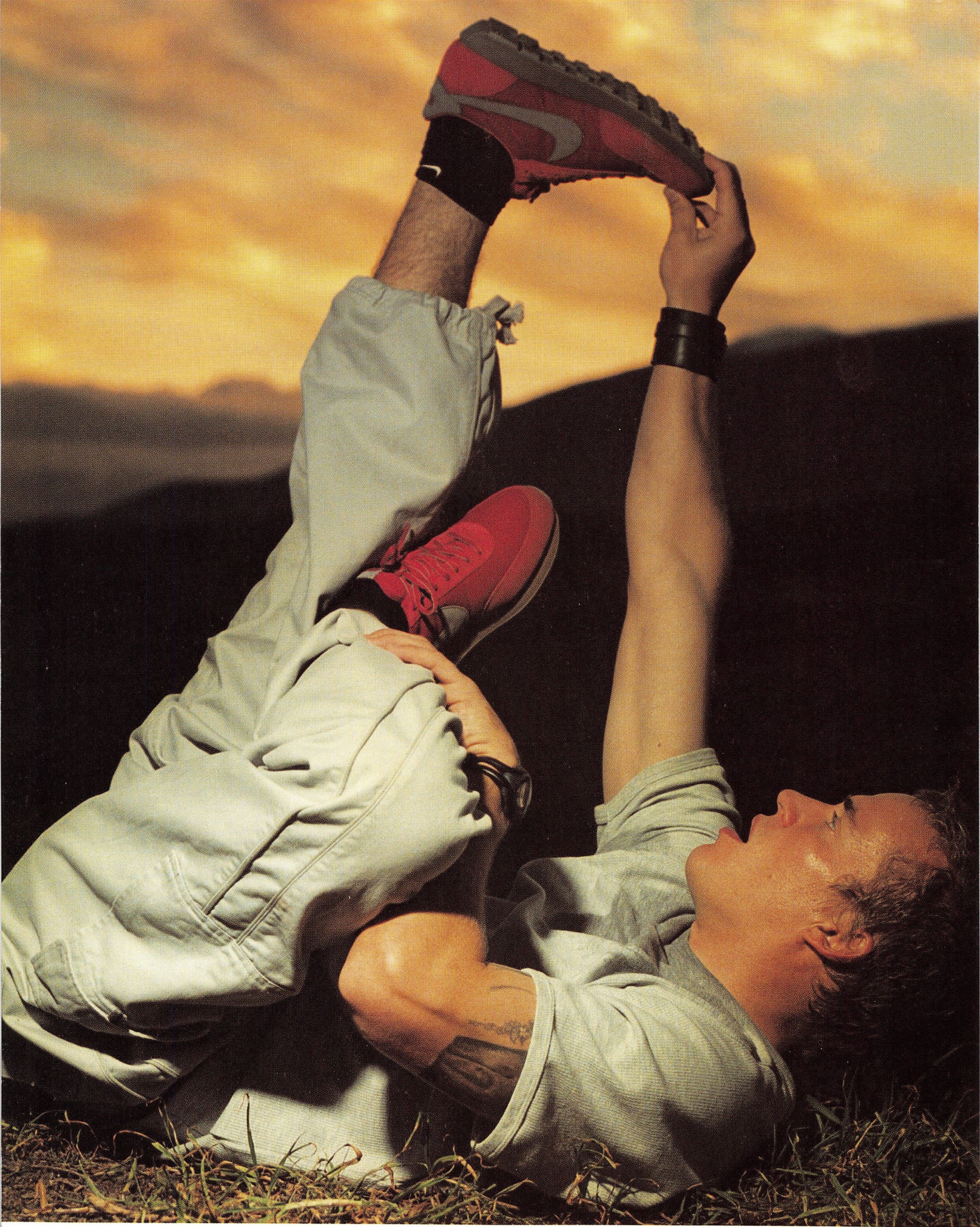


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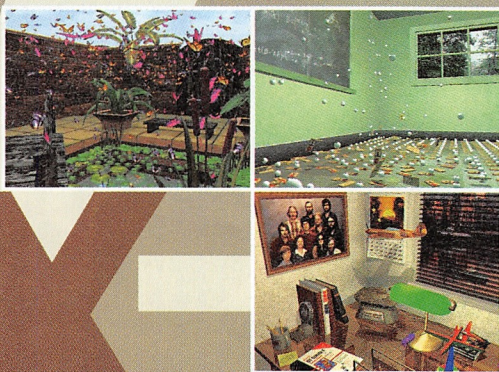
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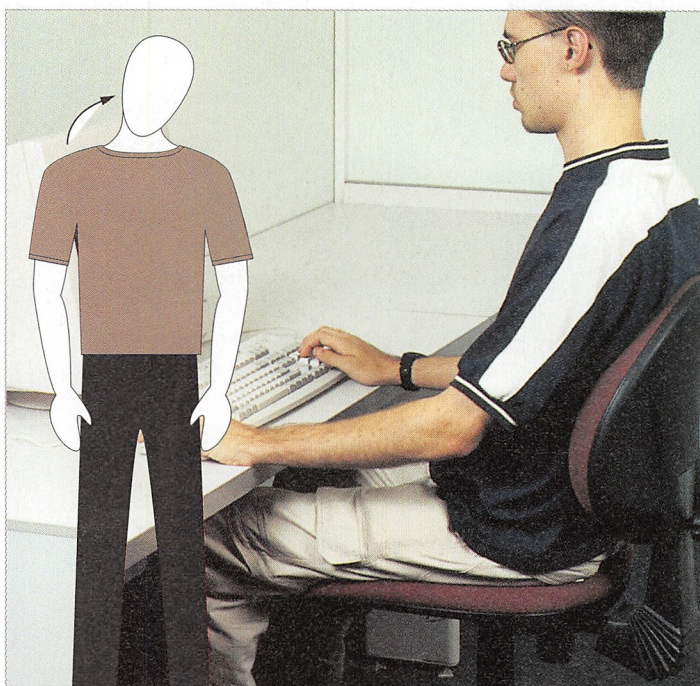
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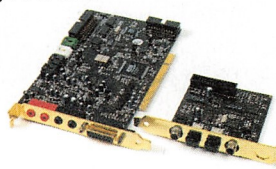
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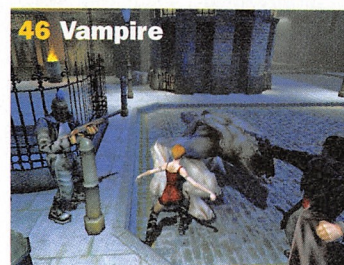
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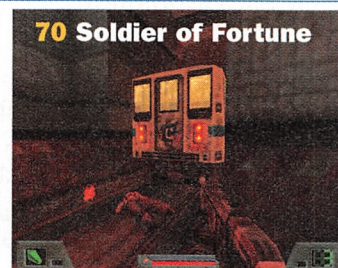
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Open up and say BLAH!

I'm all for reality in gaming. Really. And I think that it's great that graphical and audio technology have come to the point where fantastical things - flying a plane, racing an F1 car, visiting a dungeon - can be simulated on your home PC. Actually the whole dungeon thing is pretty common here in Sydney, but that's another matter.

When you stand back and look at it, it's just amazing that technology has come along so quickly. Twenty years ago, people were freaking out over arcade games like Pacman, and now there are 60 frame per second games on our PC's and completely computer-generated feature films in theatres.

Basically my point is this. Realism is fantastic, realism is great. But could somebody please bring me a bucket - I've just finished Soldier of Fortune.

Now, Soldier of Fortune is a damn fine game. You'll read our review, play the game, and probably come to the same conclusion. I hope you do, because I enjoyed it from start to finish. But after

wading through the dismembered limbs, missing heads and miscellaneous body parts, I think I need a lie-down.

And I'm not the squeamish type - really I'm not. I had to help deliver a cow or two when I was a kid and I'll happily pick up a spider or a cockroach and deposit outside. I can even sit through an entire installment of 'Australia's Funniest Home Videos'. Tough, eh? But the unrelenting nature of the gore in Soldier of Fortune was almost too much for me. Sure, I completed the missions. Sure, I saved a decent proportion of the hostages. Sure, I caused permanent injury to some polygonal menace. But my experience with Soldier of Fortune has taught me one large lesson - I'm not cut out to be a mercenary warrior. And my parents had such high hopes...

Lastly, time for an apology. We had expected to be bringing you a report on the Diablo II beta test. Unfortunately the test was delayed (AGAIN!) and just missed our deadline. It's currently happening as you read this, so we'll definitely have it next month.

Dan Ziffer, Editor



● ● spotlight

HEADLINES: Morrowind • Carmageddon 2000 • Buffy • Vanguard • Suzuki Alstare Racing
Tony Hawk Skateboarding • Divinity • Dreamland • Blade • Enemy Engaged

Star Wars Online

BUT EVERYONE WANTS TO BE BOBA FETT

It's been the stuff of rumour and gossip for months now, but at last Lucas has made the official announcement. In Episode Two, Anakin Skywalker will be played by Hugh Norton-Smith... Oops, sorry, let us start that again. Star Wars is going online!

LucasArts has revealed that a massively multiplayer online game set in the Star Wars universe is currently under development. Verant Interactive, the company behind the highly successful Everquest, has been handed the responsibility of making it all happen. In a rather wise move, the era depicted in the original trio of films has been chosen as the game's inspiration and time period, rather than that of the insipid Phantom Menace. Like Everquest, the game will use a 3D engine and provide a firstperson view.

At this stage, the game will also be set exclusively on Tatooine, with players living out their lives as bounty hunters, mercenaries or rebel soldiers to name but a few of the planned roles that will be available. Later, Verant hopes to include interplanetary travel and at least a handful of new planets to visit.

Speculation has thus far centred around whether or not you'll be able to take on the role of any of the



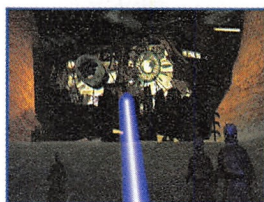
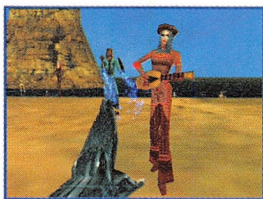
As it's set on Tatooine, we'll be bitterly disappointed if Star Wars Online doesn't feature Pod racing.

famous Star Wars characters. The answer it seems is that you won't. Despite it being many a fan-boy's dream to actually "be" Han Solo, Boba Fett or, indeed, Princess Leia, it's difficult to imagine exactly how the game could possibly work with such important people as player characters.

Interestingly, to coincide with LucasArts' announcement, Activision informed us that that it

would be cutting ties with Verant regarding their planned massively multiplayer Star Trek game. It's still said to be in development, only by someone other than Verant.

The planned release date for Star Wars Online is next year, of course.



We imagine Star Wars Online will be a mix of Everquest (top) and Obi-Wan (above)

Garriott Quits Origin!

THE LORD IS DEAD, LONG LIVE LORD BRITISH!

With the Ultima series recently reaching its long overdue conclusion (Ultima IX: Ascension, PCPP #45 70%), the big question on the lips of Lord British fans worldwide has been "Just what on earth is that clever Dick going to do next?". While rumours abound that Richard Garriott (creator of the

Ultima series) has begun working on a yet to be announced multiplayer-only virtual world tentatively titled "X", his first post-UIX move has been the resignation from Origin Systems, the company he formed more than fifteen years ago.

Although some industry insiders claim increased friction and tension

between Garriott's future direction and that of EA's, the official statement has been that of an amicable parting.

All reports seem to indicate that Richard is still going full-steam ahead with X, however no formal announcement has been made. More news as it happens.



FIRST LOOK!



Morrowind

• Genre: **RPG** • Developer: **Bethesda** • Due: **Late 2001**

Soon after the success of *Daggerfall* in 1996, Bethesda announced its follow-up and the third in the *Elder Scrolls* roleplaying series, *Morrowind*. And then... nothing. In fact, after that Bethesda all but disappeared off the face of the gaming planet, releasing only the bug-ridden *Battlespire* in the four years since.

It may have taken four years to get up and running, but judging from these incredibly impressive screenshots the wait has been (or will be, the release date is still a long way off) worth it. *Morrowind* is officially on its way. With it, Bethesda is pledging to redefine the roleplaying genre by "presenting the most detailed virtual world ever created." To do this they've abandoned the former game engine - the *XnGine* - and started from scratch. It must be said that the new 3D engine they've created looks incredibly powerful; the level of detail in these shots is quite astounding. One impressive feature is the way each character's clothing and carried items are 3D objects, which may allow the player to pickpocket others with ease.

And after *Ultima IX*, by now most RPG fans will probably have a PC fast enough to cope with such a graphical feast. Let's hope so, anyway.

Strategic Takeover

MAXIS AND ENSEMBLE PURSUE EXPANSIONIST POLICIES

Two of the most successful strategy games of all time will shortly receive expansion packs to extend your rulership into a second term. Maxis is currently putting the finishing touches upon *SimCity 3000 Unlimited*, the first official add-on for *SC3K*. New features include two complete building sets (one European, one Asian), four extra disasters (acid rain, whirlpools, locust plagues and - yikes! - space debris), plus the usual new scenarios. When the pack is released in May, you'll also enjoy a scenario creator that allows specific mission goals to be set.

Elsewhere, Bruce Shelley and the Ensemble guys have begun work on *The Conquerors*, the expansion pack for *Age of Empires II*. Five new races will be added, alongside an extra four campaigns and bonus technology for everyone. The experienced player should appreciate the handful of gameplay tweaks as well. For example, farms no longer need quite as much micromanagement to maintain. *The Conquerors* will be available later this year.



TRIO FORGE ON

Three senior programmers who recently left Blizzard have founded a new studio called Triforge. Having worked on *Warcraft 3* and *Battle.net*, it's not surprising the trio will be designing original multiplayer games. Development on *Warcraft 3* won't be affected.

JUGGLING!

In more add-on news, Impressions' addictive god-sim *Pharaoh* is getting one as well. Titled *Cleopatra*, one of its 15 new missions will have you building the Lighthouse at Alexandria. No news as to whether you can juggle knives instead of pins, however.

LOCAL FOCUS

A REGULAR SERIES WHERE WE PROFILE ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S GAME DEVELOPMENT STUDIOS AND THEIR CURRENT PROJECT.

Torus Games

THIS MONTH: **ANDREW SCOTT** FROM MELBOURNE'S TORUS GAMES TALKS ABOUT MAKING THE LATEST **CARMAGEDDON**

How did Torus become involved with Carmageddon?

Andrew: SCI, the game's publisher, first became interested in Torus at E3 1998. We were displaying a new 3D engine and physics engine that we had in development and SCI liked what they saw. Over the months following E3 we negotiated a deal and a design until work finally got underway in December 1998.

How does it feel to be working on such a popular and well-known series?

Andrew: Working on the title has definitely given the company a boost, both in profile and in size. We have employed an additional 15 people just for the TDR title, making Torus one of the largest game developers in Australia. The advantages of doing Carmageddon include things such as expanding the profile of Torus (and the Australian Games Development industry as a whole) plus the title will assist us in gaining other high profile games. However, the popularity of the brand also means that you have a huge amount of fans watching your every move to ensure you live up to their expectations. If we don't live up to those expectations the title could do as much damage to our reputation as it can do good.

Does the "controversial" nature of the game make for a liberating or restricting design process?

Andrew: The controversial nature of the game can be liberating in

some ways in that we can bring some of our sick and absurd fantasies to life, more than you could in other titles. It also means that censorship boards will look at the finished product a lot closer than they normally would, meaning it is harder to hide the odd expletive!

What new features have you been working on for TDR 2000?

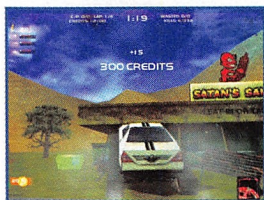
Andrew: The 3D engine, physics engine and renderer are all brand new, meaning the visual impact and processing power of the game has been expanded greatly. All the features of previous versions will still be there, plus additions such as internet play, multiple screen resolutions, realtime hard shadows and reflections, advanced AI (including cops that consistently



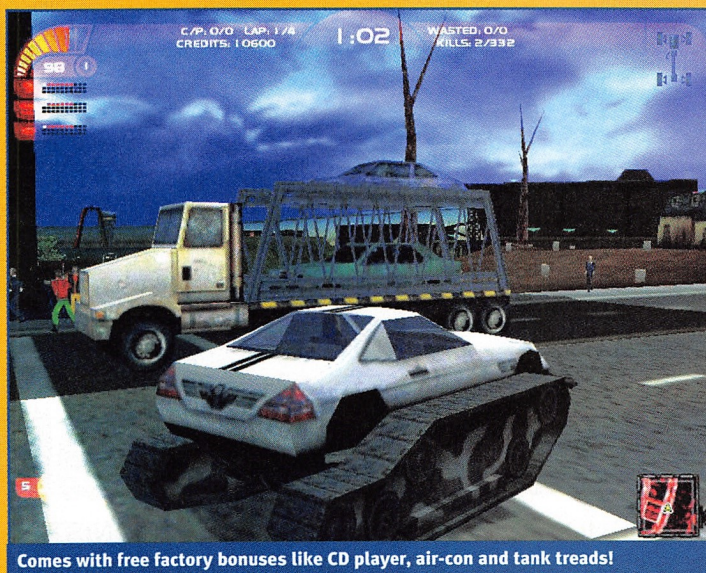
chase you), 10 massive contrasting environments, 30 races and 30 missions plus a free-play mode. We've also been able to take advantage of new technologies in hardware to include features such as environmental bump mapping, 3D audio and volumetric particle system for realistic smoke, oil, etc.

How close is the game to completion, and when is a likely release date?

Andrew: The guys here are working around the clock to ensure this is by far the best of the Carmageddon series and are very close to a finished product. The release date is 2nd quarter 2000.



Carmageddon: The Death Race 2000. Soon to be the subject of moral outrage near you.



Comes with free factory bonuses like CD player, air-con and tank treads!

AUSTRALIA'S MOST WANTED

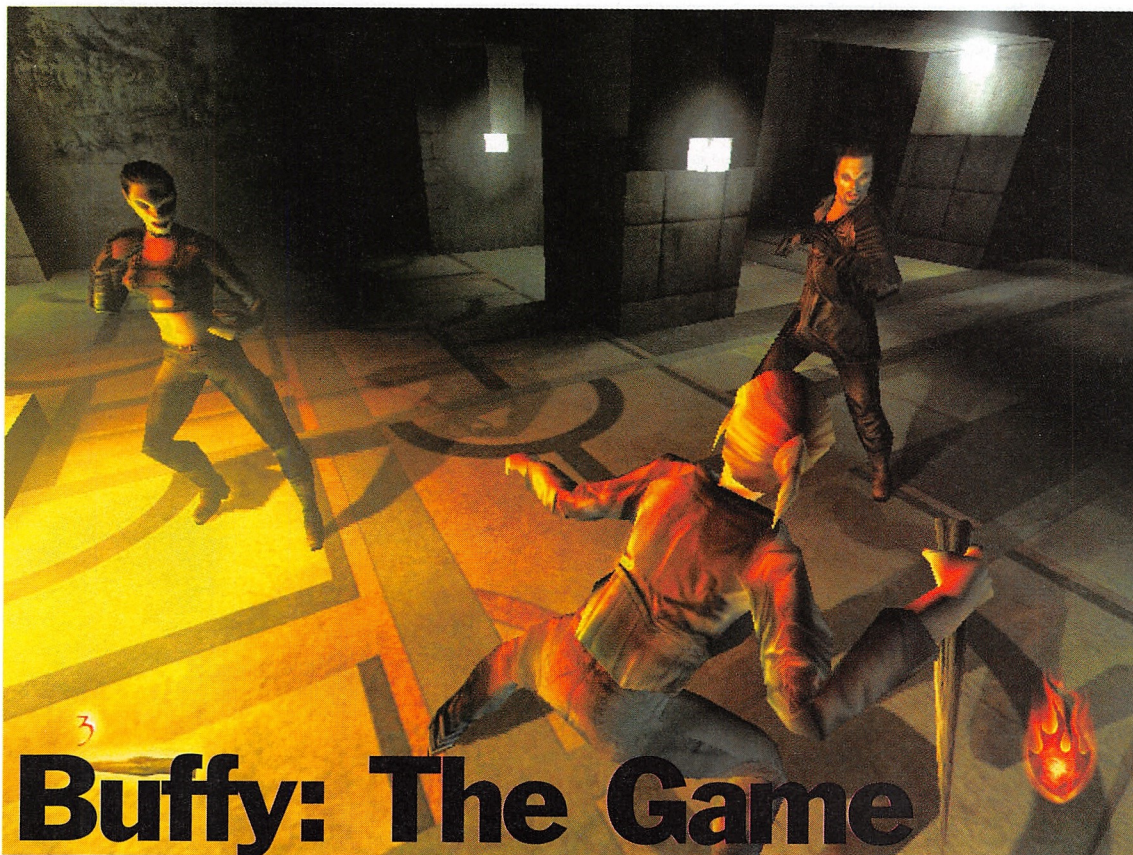
With the beta test now finally underway, Diablo 2 strengthens its hold on the number one position. We're hoping to be able to bring you a diary of our adventures on Battlenet next month. Below Blizzard's runaway favourite, Team Fortress 3 and Deus Ex are separated by a mere handful of votes. A late surge by Thief 2 would have seen it in fifth had it not gone and got itself released, thus disqualifying it from the chart. The silly thing.

Send your Top Five Most Wanted Games to: wanted@pcpowerplay.next.com.au



This month's winner, **Chris Lowery** from Wyndamvale, VIC, has his sight set on Star Trek: Armada, a copy of which will be beamed to him any day now.

1	DIABLO 2	◀
2	Team Fortress 2	◀
3	Warcraft 3	◀
4	Deus Ex	◀
5	Duke Nukem Forever	◀
6	Baldur's Gate 2	◀
7	Grand Prix 3	◀
8	Black & White	◀
9	Halo	◀
10	Giants	◀



Buffy: The Game

TEEN VAMPIRE SLAYING ACTION JUST IN TIME FOR HALLOWEEN

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, the hippest teen drama on television in recent times, is coming to a PC near you. The title will be an action-adventure, picking up on the fast-paced slaying action of the show. Interaction with all of the show's favourite characters will be there: Giles, Willow, Xander, Cordelia, et al. Will the game feature the wit and humour of the show or the hack-n-slash of the action genre? We're hoping for a faithful gaming version of the show, which could make it a stand out title of the year. *(It'll be John's favourite, at least - Ed.)* Fox Interactive will publish the title and the developer is The Collective. The release is promised to be Halloween in the US, so we can expect this one for Christmas.



GOD'S KINGDOM

Gathering of Developers has licensed a realtime strategy game from Korea that promises exceptional animation and online gameplay. Kingdom Under Fire looks kinda like Diablo meets Age of Empires to us. But then we're lazy.



Totally Trek

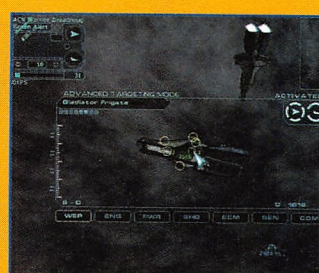
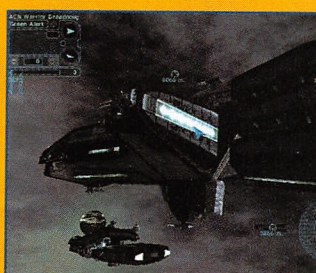
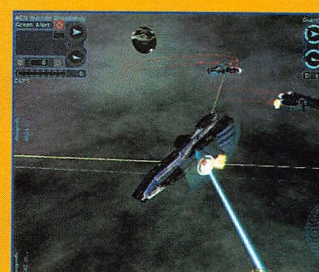
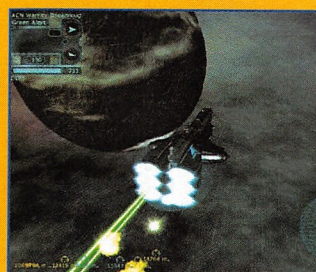
Activision has announced that development has begun on a new space simulation set in the Star Trek universe. Titled Star Trek: Bridge Commander, the game is in production at Totally Games, the studio founded by former LucasArts designer Lawrence Holland. Befitting its Next Generation license, Bridge Commander will feature the voices of Patrick Stewart and Brent Spiner, and allow the player to fly both Galaxy and Sovereign class versions of the Enterprise.

FIRST LOOK!

Vanguard

• Genre: Space Combat • Developer: Red Storm • Due: 3rd Qtr 2000

After bringing you the first news of Red Storm's latest title in PCPP#47, we can now show off a few screenshots, too. It's called Vanguard (possibly with the acronym UFS at the front) and any gamer bold enough to tackle its space-bound action will find himself in the captain's seat of a capital ship. As usual, there's a war on (it must be in the contract, we suspect) and you've chosen to side with the United Forces Navy against the rather fascist-sounding Hierarchy of Man. Interestingly, the thirdperson perspective is in stark contrast to the firstperson cockpit point-of-view typically employed by this type of game. However, with the appropriate interface Homeworld has shown this can work. Hopefully, Vanguard will follow suit.



In PCPP#41 we told you space sims were the new hot genre. We were right.

RANT!

SOMETIMES THERE JUST ISN'T ENOUGH ROOM FOR ALL OUR OPINIONS

LucasRant

If you'd told me two and a half years ago that LucasArts would be producing inconsequential drivél masquerading as games, I would've slapped you about the head. Or at least shook my head furiously. Well, godammit! My worst fears have been realised. The fact is that something happened in the late 90s that saw this once proud company lose its way into the "official license" wilderness.

The logic goes something like this:

1. I have a license for some of the most popular culture figures in recent history, hooray for me!
2. Let's make some games out of them.
3. These babies are gonna sell no matter what, so let's do away with the high production values and create lightweight "action" titles
4. Name these games, The Phantom Menace, Infernal Machine and Force Commander.

Okay, I'm mad because I haven't seen a graphic adventure from LucasArts for WAY too long. But I'm equally as mad because the games that it does choose to produce are of such a low calibre. Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis was a first rate adventure title - so what does LucasArts do as an encore? The regrettable Infernal Machine. Jedi Knight was a pretty awesome game - what's the follow up? Obi-Wan, which looks to be another over the shoulder yawn-fest like Phantom Menace. Now we hear that Monkey Island 4 (tentatively subtitled: Guybrush gets a walking frame), is on the drawing board. Let me guess the rest...

The most disappointing thing is that LucasArts has the track record and resources to make mind-blowing games. Instead it chose to look to the bottom line for inspiration, or a lack thereof. Surely there is no future for such bland, safe gaming titles.

John Dewhurst

FIRST LOOK!

Suzuki Racing

● Genre: **Racing** ● Developer: **Criterion**
● Due: **3rd Qtr 2000**

With the proliferation of more realistic motorcycle simulations of late, oh how refreshing it is to see another title that's bringing the two-wheeled racer back to its roots. With Motocross Madness 2 looming on the horizon, Suzuki Alstare Extreme Racing (to give it its full name) takes a more down to earth (and traditional) approach to the sport. Remember games like Moto Racer or Road Rash? Suzuki Racing continues the fine tradition of speed and knee-gashing fun over restrictive realism.

How does hooning down narrow tracks set precariously close to cliff edges sound? Or burning down stretches of



Let's hope this turns out as well as Moto Racer 2.

beautiful beaches at full throttle? Enticing? To be sure, Suzuki Racing will place the player in all manner crash-defying racing situations. Fear not, though. In the beta version we've played, your bike is mysteriously placed a couple of hundred metres further down the track every time you manage a spectacular stack.

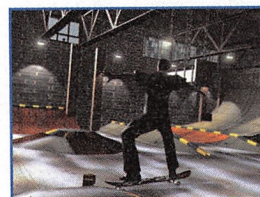


Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2

TONY AND PALS OLLIE ONTO THE PC

If you're the type that peppers your PC exploits with the odd PlayStation jaunt, then you may have already heard of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater. Combining a robust physics engine (those awesome stacks need to be modelled with spectacular detail to do the "sport" justice) with phrenetic world design and lots of freedom to experiment with tricks, this skating adventure proved surprisingly addictive.

Well there's some good news for the strictly-PC faithful - Neversoft is bringing the sequel to the PC! As well as the usual enhancements you'd expect from a follow-up, Tony 2 will feature more detailed environments (where almost any surface will be able to support tricks), multiplayer competitions, as well as a comprehensive track editor.



PCPP DIARY

MAY 10-12
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT EXPO (E3)

E3 may not have the history of the Game Developers Conference, but it certainly seems to generate more anticipation and excitement. Occupying the breadth and span of the LA Convention Centre, E3 is packed to the brim with all things computer entertainment related - including, of course, lavish pyrotechnic displays and a legion of friendly and helpful models. Last year's E3 (in LA for the first time after a two year stint in Atlanta, GA) saw four hundred computer game industry exhibitors display nearly two thousand titles.

E3 gives the industry (including yours truly) the chance to check out the many games currently in development, warts and all. But that's not all. The developers themselves - bless 'em - use E3 as a platform from which to announce tasty new titles.

FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE! ENLIST!

Actual game fighters.



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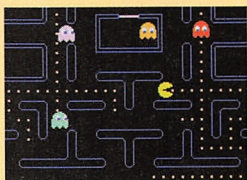
Digital Anvil

RANT!

SOMETIMES THERE JUST ISN'T ENOUGH ROOM FOR ALL OUR OPINIONS

Nostalgia Sucks

You may have seen a trend in the last 18 months, a trend towards nostalgia for old games. Oh, you know what I'm talking about. Space Invaders, Pac-Man, Asteroids, Centipede: all those games that really hit pop culture in the late 70s and 80s. It's hard to remember the impact that videogames (that's what the kids were calling them, then) had on the culture around us at the time. Crappy 80s music embraced them: Mi-Sex had the big hit "Computer Games", and some god-awful Eurotrash band had a song "Space Invaders". Pop culture just really embraced the entire concept.



Now, in the new millennium, the wave of 80s retro is back, and they've bought these disgusting, archaic games with them. It is very important, I think, for us to take a deep breath and realise that like all 80s movies, fashion and culture **THESE GAMES SUCK!!**

Galaga is terrible, Space Invaders moronic, Asteroids is boring, Zork (the grandfather of all RPGs) is intensely stupid, easy and dull. If you then go and start playing them to relive a lost childhood, or even worse, get a feel for where games were coming from, then you are no longer using games as escapism. You are just wasting your life.

To our younger readers, I implore, don't get sucked in by the phoney hype. They were fun, but look at games three years old. Then think about how primitive they were 10, 15, or 20 years ago. To people who were around then: honestly, do you want to give up Myth, Command & Conquer, or even Doom to play a game of Pong again?

No. Let the past go, guys. The 80s were bad.

Christian Read

FIRST LOOK

Divinity

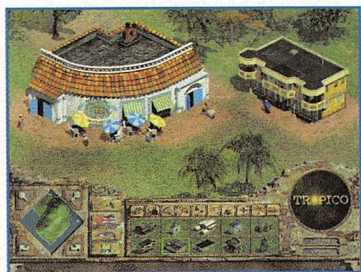
● Genre: Roleplaying ● Developer: Larian Studios
● Due: 4th Qtr 2000

Take the accessibility and user-friendliness of Diablo, add the combat and isometric prettiness of Baldur's Gate, then liberally sprinkle the depth of story and interaction of Ultima VII and you'll have the kind of game Larian Studios is aiming for with Divinity. Also high on the agenda is the creation of a world where the player's actions mean something. Larian is striving for a gameworld that revolves without intervention from the player, yet still provides a tangible consequence to all his actions. Providing the RPG core is a skills system reminiscent of Daggerfall (you have to practice skills to become proficient) and party system where your main character is joined at certain moments by an array of NPCs.



Poptop Go Tropo

BE A CENTRAL AMERICAN **DICTATOR!**



Club Med it most definitely is not.

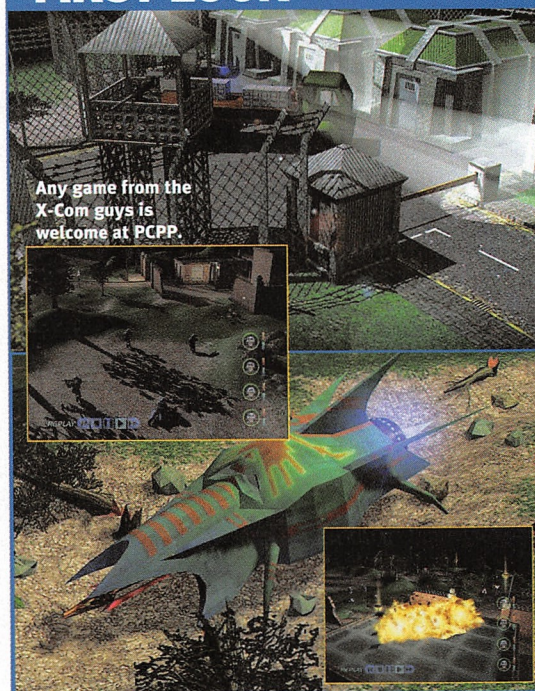
It's a brilliant idea, we must admit. Kick back in the sun and sand of your beachside retreat while determining the fate of countless poverty and disease stricken citizens. And all the time trying to amass as much third-world debt as possible and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with several major league drug barons. This is the scenario of PopTop's latest strategy game, Tropico.

Building on the success of their locomotive hit Railroad Tycoon 2, PopTop are devising a strategy game

where diplomacy and politics come to the fore. Players take on the role of a dictator of a fictional Caribbean island that they must guide to economic prosperity, avoiding the ever-likely prospect of a civil uprising. Tropico will utilise PopTop's proprietary engine first seen in RT2, meaning you can expect a highly detailed isometric view of your domain.

Gathering of Developers will publish and a release prior to the year's end is not entirely out of the question.

FIRST LOOK

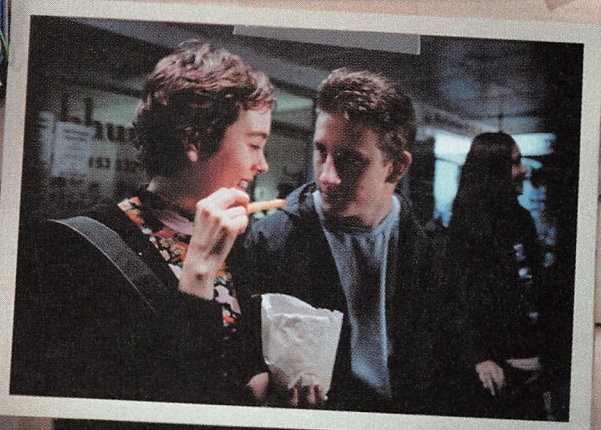
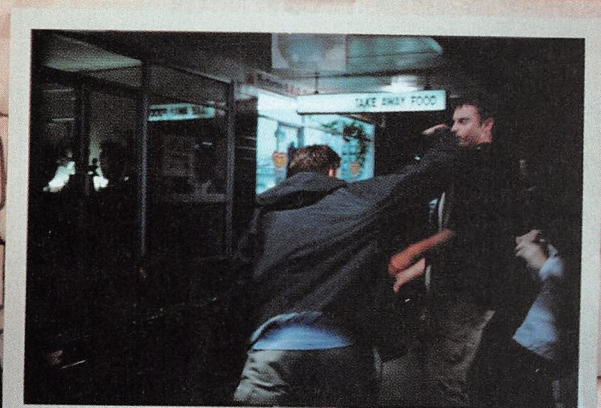
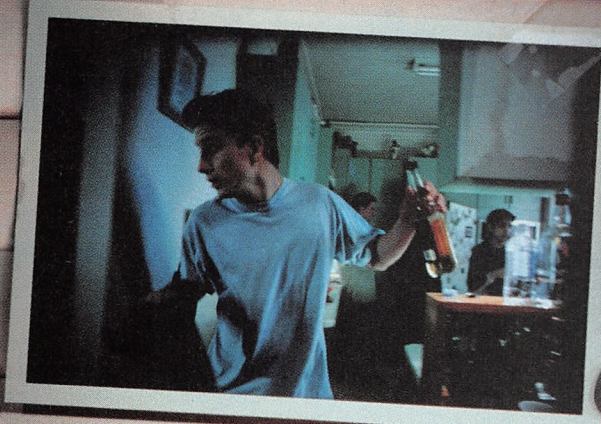
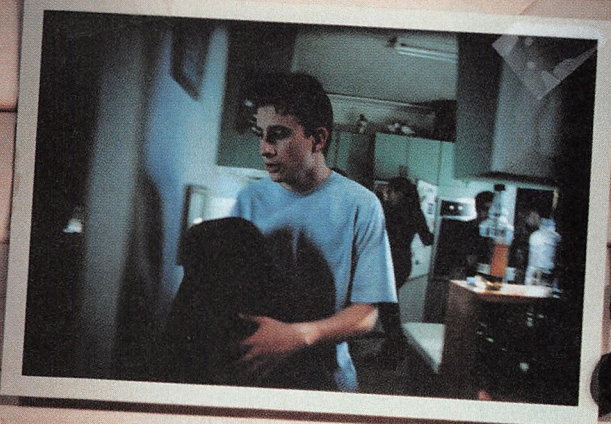


Dreamland

● Genre: Tactical Combat ● Developer: Mythos Games
● Due: 4th Qtr 2000

According to Dreamland's developer, Mythos Games, their new game's title comes from the name of a "top secret" facility inside Area 51, the complex that allegedly houses all the US government knows about alien contact with Earth. Which makes perfect sense when you realise the game's all about aliens, this time it's a particularly nasty race called the Saurans - and their invasion of Earth.

Among its talented ranks, Mythos contains the guys who created the original X-Com for Microprose, which still remains the definitive turn-based game of tactical combat. It won't surprise, then, to learn that Dreamland occupies a similar genre. The game is split into two aspects: a strategic worldview that allows the management of bases, troops and research segues into more intimate, squad-based combat. Unlike Mythos' earlier titles, Dreamland will depict its tense action with a powerful 3D engine. The NetImmerse, previously seen in Prince of Persia 3D, has been given the honour. Multiplayer games will even have you being able to play as the aliens.



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FILM FROID

The makers of the Broken Sword adventure games, Revolution, are currently working on a cinematic action/adventure about a British secret service agent. In Cold Blood, as it is called, will be published by Ubi Soft later this year.

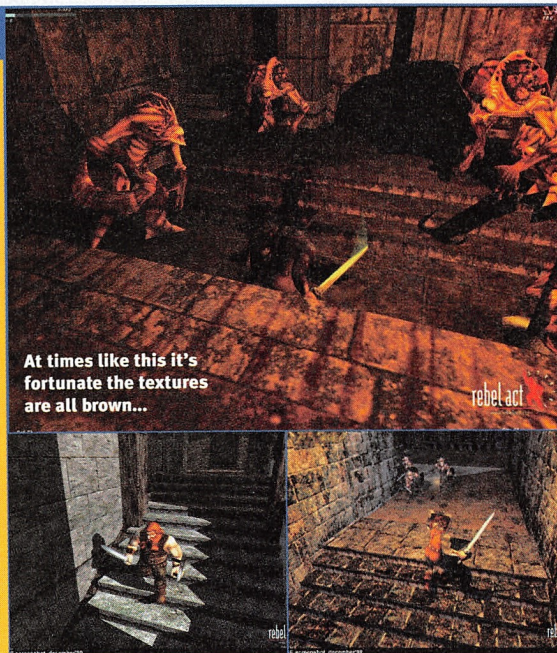
NEW SHOTS

Blade

• Genre: **Beardy Action** • Developer: **Rebel Act**
• Due: **3rd Qtr 2000**

Direct from Spain, Rebel Act Studios' Blade is impressively hirsute action/adventure romp. Of course, you knew it would be a romp - all action/adventure are invariably labelled as such - but this looks better than most. There are four characters from which to choose (a knight, barbarian, dwarf and an amazon for the ladies) to take into battle against an agreeable selection of orcs, trolls, skeletons and all your favourite nefarious Tolkien types.

Realtime shadows and lighting effects are the promised highlight of a fairly impressive 3D engine. The grand castles, medieval dungeons and vast caves that comprise the game's locations will obviously benefit from such extravagant visual trappings.



At times like this it's fortunate the textures are all brown...

Little blokes?

REALTIME STRATEGY WITH THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN

Creature Labs, the developer formerly known as CyberLife and most famous for the Creatures series of virtual pet style games, has announced a new title based on the Yeti. Purportedly a realtime strategy game, Beasts puts the player in charge of a tribe of Yeti, the mythical creature said to inhabit the Himalayas. The game concerns the tension and conflict that would inevitably arise when man decides to establish a mining complex in the Yeti's territory.

Like Creature Labs' previous games, Beasts will draw upon the developer's advanced artificial life technologies to simulate the behaviour of the tribe, its social structure and, erm... mating habits. Visually and conceptually there's an obvious similarity to Lionhead's Black & White, though Beasts' gameplay will have a more traditional RTS flavour as you control squads of units.



FIRST LOOK

Enemy Engaged

• Genre: **Heli Action** • Developer: **Empire** • Due: **3rd Qtr 2000**

Empire Interactive has stumbled onto a rather neat little idea with its range of helicopter sims. Following on from last year's Apache Havoc, Enemy Engaged takes two helos - one American and one Russian - and pits them against each other in head-to-head combat. In this instance, the specific machines are the RAH-66 Comanche and the KA-52 Hokum.

Our now Rome-based Major Ian took quite a fancy to Apache Havoc, so it wouldn't surprise to find Enemy Engaged to be a quality sim as well. Considering the promised new features (improved AI, a more thorough campaign option, hardware T&L support, plus a four-player link-up option with its precursor), it's certainly off to a bright start.

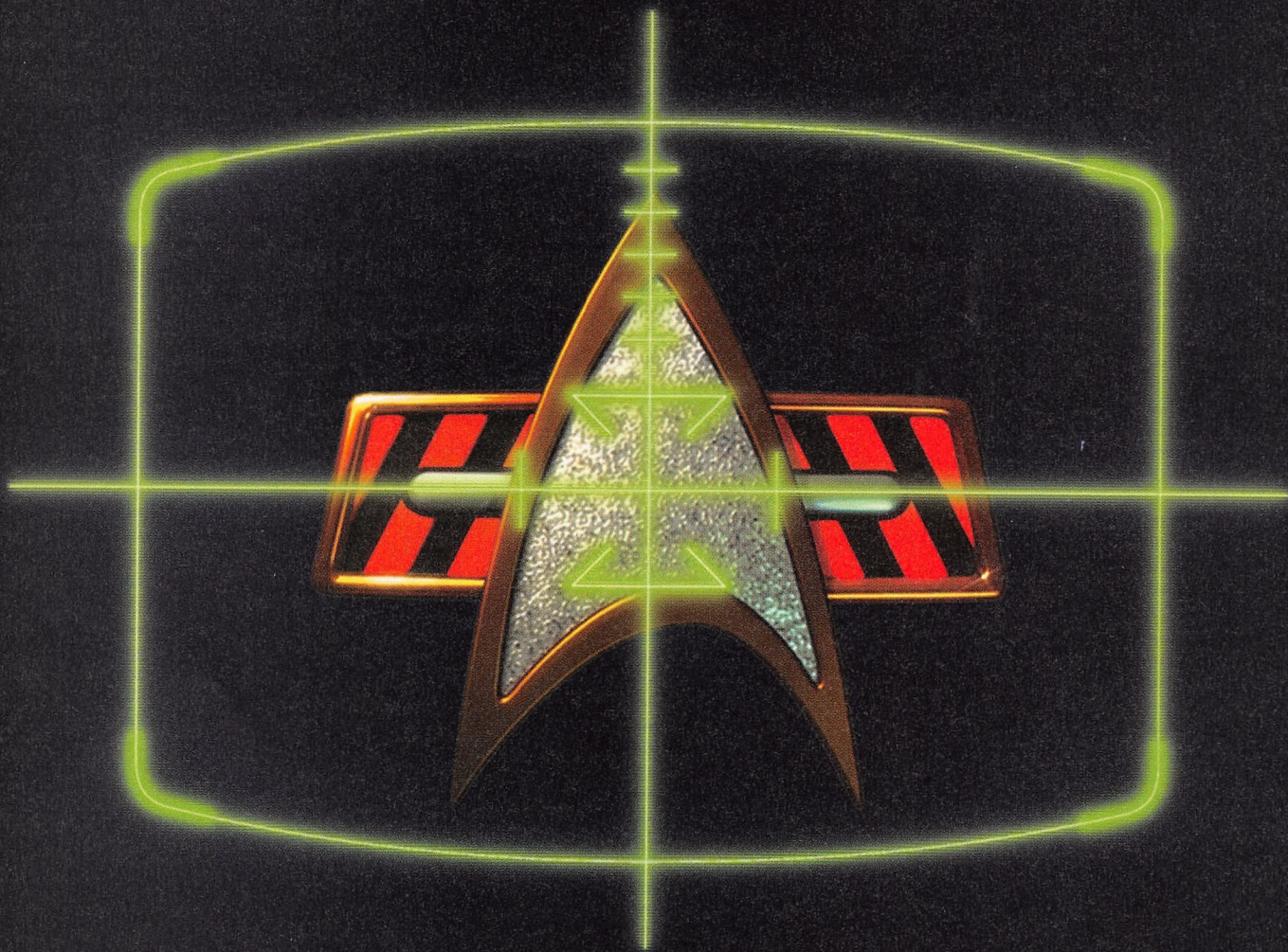


Your mission: airlift politician from rural press conference.

COMING SOON

PCPP'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO WHAT YOU'LL BE PLAYING IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. JUST MAKE SURE YOU'VE GOT THE GRAIN OF SALT READY, OKAY?

MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	AND BEYOND...	WHO KNOWS?
Deus Ex (Eidos) Dirt Track Racing (Jack of All Games) MDK 2 (Interplay) Vampire: The Masquerade (Activision)	Anachronox (Eidos) Diablo 2 (Sierra) Grand Prix 3 (Hasbro) Icewind Dale (Interplay) Starlancer (Microsoft)	B-17 2: The Mighty Eighth (Hasbro) Colin McRae Rally 2 (Eidos) Dark Reign 2 (Activision) Motocross Madness 2 (Microsoft) Rune (GOD)	Alone In The Dark 4 (Infogrames) Black & White (Electronic Arts) Giants: Citizen Kabuto (Interplay) Ground Control (Sierra) Oni (Bungie)	Baldur's Gate 2 (Interplay) Halo (Bungie) Loose Cannon (Microsoft) Obi-Wan (Lucasarts) X-Com: Alliance (Hasbro)	Daikatana (Eidos) Duke Nukem Forever (GT) Freelancer (Microsoft) Team Fortress 2 (Sierra) Tribes 2 (Sierra) Warcraft 3 (Sierra)



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Quake 3 Fortress

TAKING MULTI-CLASS TEAMPLAY ACTION TO THE ARENA

www.q3fortress.com

Deathmatch Quake 3 will always retain its appeal, but many discerning players are relying on an increasing number of mods to provide them with their recommended daily intake of team-oriented gameplay. Quake 3 Fortress is one such teamplay mod, and it's currently being developed by an independent team of talented programmers, designers and artists.

Quake 3 Fortress will compete directly with Valve's Team Fortress 2, and will feature several play modes including the ubiquitous Capture the Flag and Capture & Hold, in addition to less familiar modes like 'Command Point'. Q3F will boast several similarities to the popular Quakeworld, particularly in respect to movement physics, and several famous maps like 2Tech and Border are being ported to Q3F at this time.

The game will also introduce some unique and intriguing character classes. Among them: Engineers, Recon Specialists and Soldiers. Flametroopers will prove appealing to the more nefarious players who will undoubtedly thrill to the carnage caused by the 'trooper's trademark pressurised napalm gel flamethrower. The Minigunner, an absolute monster of a character, stands several feet taller (and wider) than the rest of the

character classes, and totes a minigun so heavy that it can only be used when the bearer is stationary. The Minigunner's insane firepower is, however, tempered by his reduced movement speed resulting from his formidable bulk and massive payload.

The light, agile Paramedic exists as the antithesis of the Minigunner, brandishing a Super Nailgun and a syringe capable of healing allies and infecting enemies. The Grenadier, master of all things that go 'boom', is one character that players will do well to avoid. His deviously deadly arsenal of Pipe Bombs, Explosive Charges and, of course, Grenades makes him a formidable, if not deadly opponent. Perhaps the most interesting class is the Agent, a character who is quite difficult to master, but also one of the most rewarding. The Agent is capable of disguising himself as a member of the opposition, and vanishing in a cloud of psychedelic gas when cornered. Equipped with weapons designed for virtually silent kills, the insidious Agent is one class that few will see, but whose presence all will be aware of.

At present, a 36MB Beta of Q3F is available for download on the official Quake 3 Fortress Web site. And when it's finished, we guarantee you'll find Q3F on our cover disc.



The Soldier



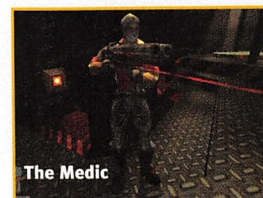
The Agent



The Engineer



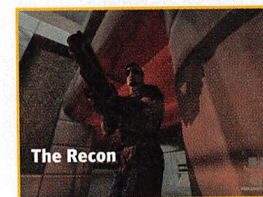
The Flametrooper



The Medic



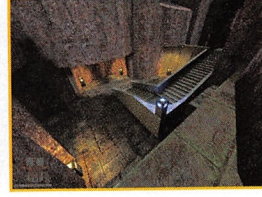
The Minigunner



The Recon



While Q3A lacked teamplay options, it was well aware that the Quake community would fill the void.





Road Rage

**INSANE OFF-ROAD RACING
DEATHMATCH-STYLE**

www.codemasters.com

As genres continue to migrate from the lonely country lanes of solo play to the now bustling online-only highways, it was inevitable that the racing game would eventually make the journey, too. The first evidence of this movement is Codemasters' aptly titled *Insane*, essentially an action game on four wheels.

Traditional circuit racing modes are a thing of the past. Instead, *Insane* fills up its tank with a host of play modes last sighted in recent firstperson shooters. Capture the Flag has each car trying to claim a flag spawned somewhere on the map; once collected it will only take a collision with another car to lose possession of the prized flag. Elsewhere, a destruction derby and checkpoint race mode feature.

As with any game that puts so much emphasis on vehicular destruction, it's vital that the damage modelling is up to scratch - pardon the pun. *Invictus*, the game's developer, is stressing that all the cars will feature damage that's not only realtime but realistic as well.

When it's released in the middle of the year, you'll be able to play *Insane* on Codemasters' dedicated server.



Ruins of Kunark

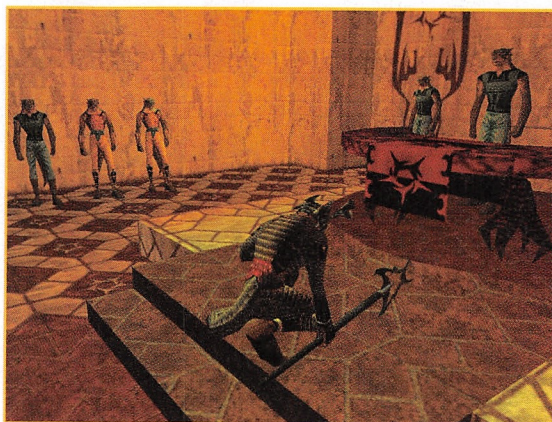
EVERQUEST LIVES UP TO ITS NAME

www.everquest.com/kunark

Verant Interactive's massively multiplayer, yada yada game, commonly known as *Everquest*, has been an extraordinary success. After eclipsing *Ultima Online* in terms of sales, it has maintained a large and loyal fanbase of regular subscribers. At present, over 200,000 people worldwide hold active *Everquest* accounts. Of course, you all know what that means: sequel time!

The *Ruins of Kunark* is the first fully-fledged expansion pack - as opposed to the frequent upgrade patches - for *Everquest*. The name is derived from the new continent players will be able to explore and, perhaps, make their home. We suspect that it might also be ruined - just call it a hunch. The 3D engine has been given an overhaul, resulting in an increased polygon count for creatures and structures alike. On the gameplay side of the equation, there's a new playable race - they're called the Iksar, but really they look like lizardmen by any other name.

Existing *Everquest* owners should be offered the opportunity to purchase the add-on when they log on in the future, while everyone else will have to make do with a trip to their nearest quality software emporium. At the time of print, the closed beta test had just wrapped up and a release in early May is, we anticipate, not entirely out of the question.



GHOULS

www.sofnews.com

The kind, gore-freaks at Raven have released what they're calling the SDK, a bunch of editing and scripting tools for use with *Soldier of Fortune*. It's complex, but allows you to make your own *SoF* levels. It's also on this month's coverdisc.



NGN TOP 5 ONLINE GAMES

1. Unreal Tournament
2. Quake III Arena
3. Starsiege Tribes
4. Half-life
5. **Ultima Online**

Send your votes to ngn@pcpowerplay.com.au
Name: Eboohah

WILD WEST-LIFE

www.wantedhl.com

Maverick Developments, a group of keen *Half-Life* players and all-round boffins, has begun work on a total conversion of everyone's fave FPS. The wild, wild west setting and frontier flavour gave them no choice but to call it *Wanted! The Half-Life Western Pack*.



WAR ONLINE

Not to be confused with Warzone 2100, Paradox Entertainment is working on an online strategy game entitled Warzone Online. Based on the table-top battle system Mutant Chronicles Warzone, the game is already taking advantage of an impressive 3D engine to depict its fast-paced tactical combat.



Dark Age Dawns

KING ARTHUR WAS PLAYER-KILLED, YOU KNOW

www.mythicgames.com

In most online roleplaying games, player-killing is a bane. There's nothing more annoying than having your newbie character chased and murdered by someone vastly more experienced before you even get the chance to buy a weapon. Except, perhaps, being chased and murdered by someone vastly more experienced after you've wasted fifteen minutes buying a harmless sword and useless armour. Which makes Mythic Games' decision to make player vs player combat a central part of their new ORPG a very intriguing one.

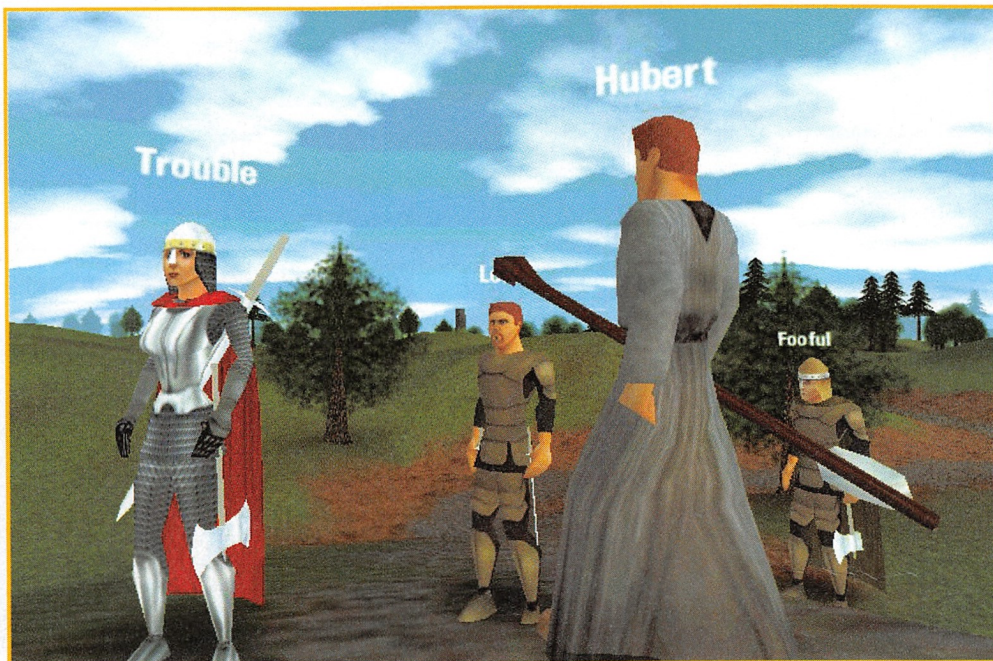
When players enter the Dark Age of Camelot, they will

choose one of three realms to which they will ally themselves. Within their home realm, players can embark on quests, dungeoneering and general monster slaying. Stray into a rival realm, however, and game's main focus becomes apparent: inter-realm warfare. Cooperating with your compatriots is the key to survival as each realm vies for control of Camelot after the death of King Arthur.

While unchecked player-killing is rampant in the likes of Ultima Online, it will be interesting to see how players react to a game that actually encourages it. We'll find out early next year when the Dark Age of Camelot is released.



The aptly-named "Skeleton" was the only one who didn't arrive in fancy dress.



NGN Poll

Email your responses to ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au, with "NGN Poll" in the subject line. Results to be published in #52.

In #46 we asked for your thoughts on modem-to-modem support in games. Here's a sample of those views:

Joy of killing

I think that if game developers want to sell more games they need to have a range of options like modem-to-modem. I still miss the joy of killing the last Zergling to win the battle vs a friend in Starcraft. It is a shame that new games have no modem-to-modem play, as it adds to the enjoyment and the lastability of a game.

Matthew Pearce

More than two

I think modem-to-modem support is a necessity, especially in strategy games. Although you can play with people you don't know and with more than two people, it is too expensive to play for hours on the net.

Irena Hrustanasic

Redundant

Modem-to-modem in modern games is as redundant as joystick calibration. All you have to do is use the Dial-up server in the Dial-Up Networking folder. Use TCP/IP and enter your IP as 127.0.0.1. This works great and you can do file sharing, too.

John Pace

Firewall that blocks

Modem to modem support is very necessary. I get Internet access for free, but with a catch. I have a firewall that blocks most gaming and chat servers. As an average teenager who depends on my parents for allowance, I cannot afford an extra connection so that I can play through the servers. I depend on modem-to-modem play.

Toby Matheson

Dying out

As more and more people have the

internet, and it is cheaper to buy IPX cards than ever before, modem-to-modem is dying out. Modem-to-modem does provide better ping than on the internet, but the internet is very easy to set up a game and there is always someone willing to play.

Ross Edwards

Definitely an asset

Modem to Modem is definitely an asset to any multiplayer game. There are NO annoying S**Theads ruining the game for everyone.

Tom

CAN I BE CHEWIE?

Verant's massively multiplayer Star Wars game has finally been announced after months of rumour. The question now is whether it will actually work. So, this month we ask:

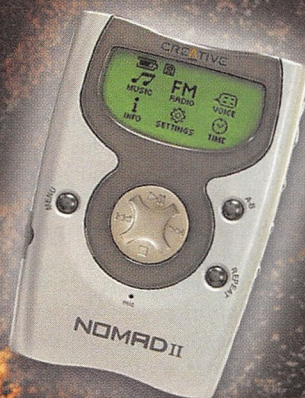
"If you were designing a Star Wars MMOG, what would it be like?"

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Game Developers Conference

IN MARCH THE WORLD'S BEST GAME DESIGNERS GATHERED TOGETHER IN SAN JOSE. AND THEN THERE WAS **ELTON CANE**.

The annual US Game Developers Conference was held in San Jose from March 8 to 12 and if you weren't paying close attention you'd be forgiven for thinking that the X-Box was all that happened there. But thankfully the GDC had a lot more to offer than William Gates' plans to take over the world.

With sponsored sessions, roundtables tutorials and lectures across six tracks: programming; business and legal; production; games design; audio; and visual arts, there was plenty of learning to be had along with the hype.

All the big guns, except Nintendo, were there representing their platforms and giving their spin on the future direction of gaming. Gates went into bat for the upcoming DirectX 8 API, showing off new capabilities for Windows gaming before launching into his X-Box spiel.

In good news for those currently running NT workstations, the new API will be compatible with

Windows 2000. So all those machines that were once "work only" can now be turned into beefed up gaming machines. Purely after hours, of course.

Using an in-development version of the upcoming Freelancer, the Microsoft team also showed how custom visuals, for example a scan of the gamer's face, can be incorporated in upcoming games using DirectX 8. Bill Gates as a fighter pilot is something most people hadn't imagined before, and as attendees saw, there's a good reason for this.

Sony's Phil Harrison didn't have too much new to show in the way of PlayStation2 game footage, but he did have a lot to say about the proposed

broadband network and the



Welcome to the GDC!



(above) The PlayStation 2 and (left) The ubiquitous X-Box demo.

effect it's likely to have on the game distribution model. According to Harrison we can look forward to more episodic games being developed for online delivery, which has implications some developers might like - it won't be so important to "finish" a game.

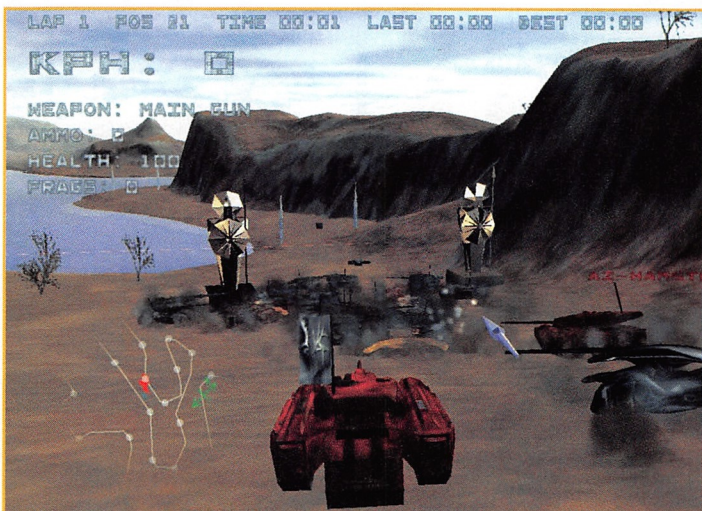
Despite all the buzz about the latest consoles, much of the content of the conference was targeted at PC developers. And though presentations differed in their focus and degree of technicality according to the six streams, some topics kept recurring and these topics reflect the major trends impacting on the games industry today.

Massively Multiplayer and Persistent Online Worlds: quite a mouthful to say, but this genre is definitely the buzzword(s) of the moment. With the success of Ultima Online and EverQuest, and upcoming major releases like Asheron's Call from Turbine and Microsoft and Middle-Earth Online from Sierra, not to mention Australia's upcoming offering, BigWorld currently being developed by Microforte, more and more developers are looking at this style of game.

Designers and other interested parties attended sessions about the role of conflict in online communities and how this affects the gamer's experience. Business and production issues relating to huge online games were also discussed, and all this talking should hopefully lead to further improvements and innovation in the genre.

Conflict in another form was also the subject of three discussion sessions sponsored by the Computer Game Developers Association's (CGDA). With the





INDEPENDENT GAMES FESTIVAL

Winners of the Second Annual Independent Games Festival were announced at the GDC, and although there were winners in many categories, Tread Marks, a hybrid tank racing combat game developed by Longbow Digital Arts dominated the festival. Longbow is a family affair, consisting of two brothers and their parents. Unfortunately lead programmer Seamus McNally succumbed to cancer on March 21st, just days after taking the top prize at the festival.

For full coverage of the festival check out www.indiegames.com

If you're interested in having a go at Tread Marks, there's a shareware demo available at www.treadmarks.com



Massively multiplayer games - such as Everquest (left) and Big World (right) were a hot topic at the conference.

media often sensationalising the effects of violence in videogames, the CDGA is currently trying to address the issue and come up with a unified response on behalf of the industry. These sessions raised some interesting questions and solutions, and the findings should soon be published on the CDGA's website (www.cdga.com).

In one of the sessions discussing the state of the industry, besides the now common line of gaming being bigger than movies, there was much talk about growing the market even further. With the ever-expanding online gaming market, developers and publishers are trying to grow the appeal of their products to target women and casual gamers. This doesn't mean that hardcore gamers will be forgotten, though.

It's a matter of a "few buying a

lot," according to Dale Strang, vice president of the ZD Game Group, and this gives the hardcore segment the most buying power. "As would be expected, the predominantly young male core players fuel the profit of the industry and spread the news of the hottest new game by word-of-mouth and media influences."

With more technological advances and so many voices calling for different types of interactive entertainment, conferences like the GDC, and our own Australian conference, are becoming more important as a focal point for the latest developments. And as the industry continues to grow we can expect endless improvements in the quality and variety of games available for us to experience. The future looks good.

CHARTS

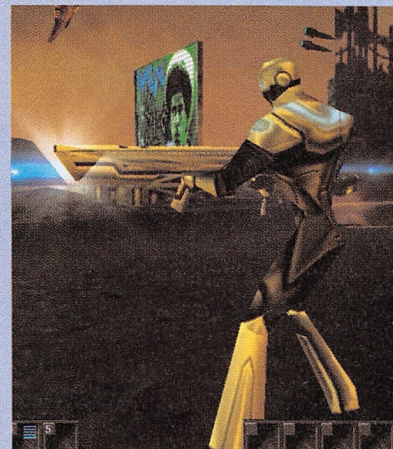


Charts supplied by
Electronics Boutique

THIS MONTH	WEEKS IN	GAME/ PUBLISHER
1	7	THE SIMS ELECTRONIC ARTS
2	2	C&C: TIBERIAN SUN - Firestorm ELECTRONIC ARTS
3	21	AGE OF EMPIRES 2 MICROSOFT
4	2	FINAL FANTASY VIII OZISOFT
5	5	MECHWARRIOR 3: Pirates' Moon HASBRO INTERACTIVE
6	16	HALF-LIFE: Adrenalin Pack DATAFLOW
7	15	QUAKE 3 ARENA ACTIVISION
8	1	BATTLEZONE 2 ACTIVISION
9	5	NOX ELECTRONIC ARTS
10	18	BALDUR'S GATE COLLECTION INTERPLAY
11	17	HALF-LIFE: Opposing Force DATAFLOW
12	2	MYTH: The Total Codex Pack OZISOFT
13	4	GRAND PRIX WORLD HASBRO INTERACTIVE
14	7	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 99/00 OZISOFT
15	12	PLANESCAPE TORMENT INTERPLAY
16	8	ULTIMA ONLINE: Discovery Edition ELECTRONIC ARTS
17	16	UNREAL TOURNAMENT GT INTERACTIVE
18	16	SWAT 3D DATAFLOW
19	5	ULTIMA IX: Dragon Edition ELECTRONIC ARTS
20	5	AGE OF WONDERS JACK OF ALL GAMES

NETWORK NEXT

In case you missed the big news last month, here it is again - PC PowerPlay is now online!



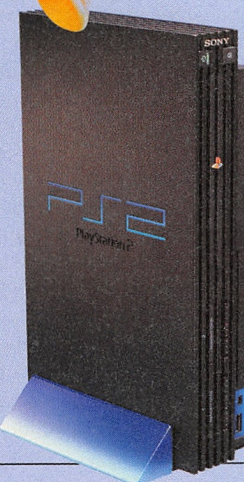
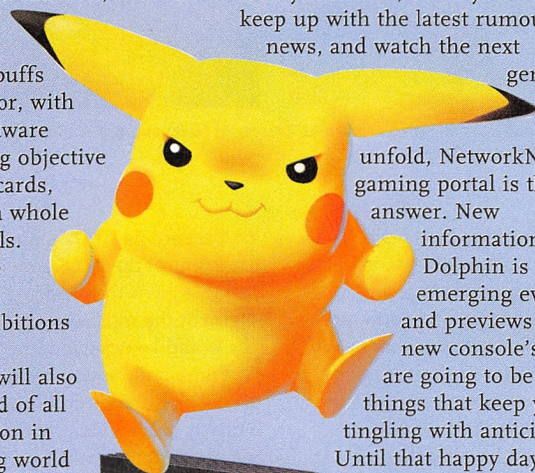
✱ As part of the NEXTgaming channel on NetworkNext.com, the PC PowerPlay team is working on bringing you the latest gaming news from around the globe. In addition to a comprehensive news section (which is updated on a daily basis), PC PowerPlay Online features all the latest in reviews and previews. But wait - there's more! There's also a section devoted solely to hints, tips and playguides to provide those looking to improve their scores, or complete that final mission, with all the ill-gotten information they need. Hardware buffs are also catered for, with an extensive hardware section containing objective reviews of video cards, audio cards and a whole host of peripherals. Up to the minute reports from conferences, exhibitions and official announcements will also keep you apprised of all the latest goings on in the ever-changing world of PC games.

PC PowerPlay Online will also bring you new technology demos, game footage and hands-on impressions, all in a format that's updated daily. "Ho hum, just another website," you might be thinking. But with the combined resources of PC PowerPlay, PC GameGuide and Hot Hardware,

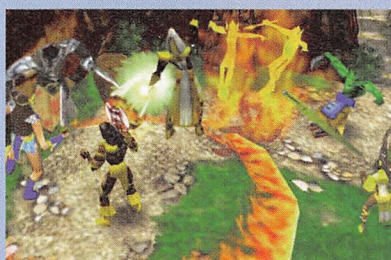
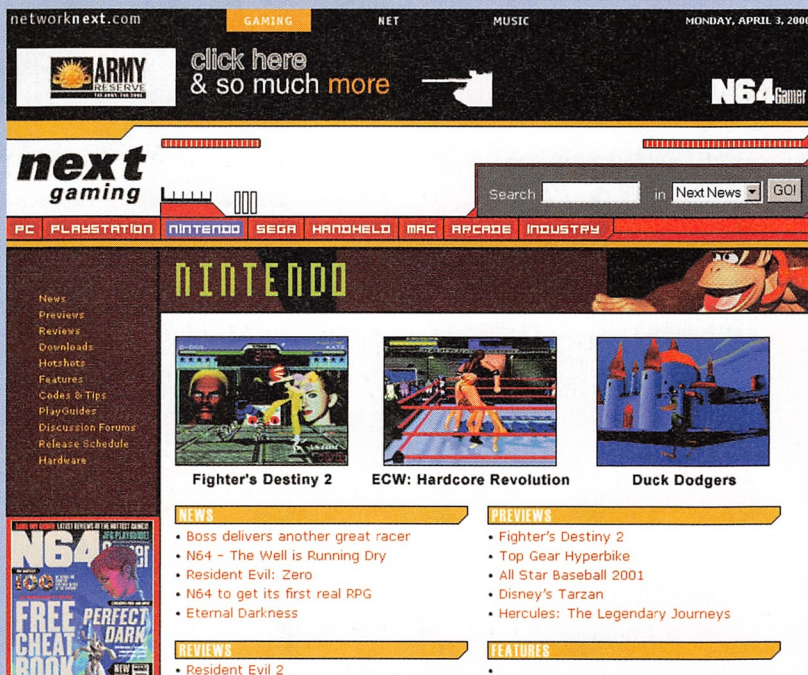
NetworkNext and PC PowerPlay Online is everything but.

Hot Next Generation Console Coverage

With more next generation consoles on the horizon and PC technology changing all the time it's becoming increasingly important to stay informed in order to make the right gaming choices. Of course, you should already know that the X-Box and the Playstation 2 are going to totally kick arse, but if you want to keep up with the latest rumours and news, and watch the next



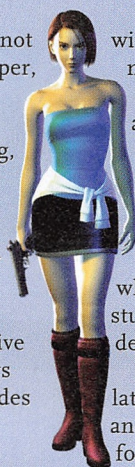
generation console battle unfold, NetworkNEXT's gaming portal is the answer. New information on the Dolphin is emerging every day, and previews of the new console's games are going to be the things that keep you tingling with anticipation. Until that happy day when you get the latest Nintendo technology in your hot little hands, you're going to have to rely on screenshots and insider information to satisfy your appetites. This is where NetworkNext.com comes in. No waiting around for the monthly magazine to hit the stands, you can check out the latest screens from Saffire and other juicy titles in development for Dolphin as soon as they're



available.

And while you're at it why not pretty up your PC with wallpaper, themes and screensavers featuring your favourite video game characters. Donkey Kong, Sonic the Hedgehog, Mario, 007 and a special cyber centrefold featuring Peach in an interesting pose with Kirby (ahem) can all be accessed from the downloads section.

If that's not enough incentive for you, the site's also chockers with cheats, hints and playguides too.



Hyperactive 3.1

Established in early 1995, Hyperactive is Australia's premiere gaming site. And now it's bigger and better than ever before.

Hyperactive has always had all the fine things you want from an Internet gaming site - news, previews, reviews, cheats and codes and competitions. Mmm... free stuff.

But now Hyperactive 3.1 is here with more of what you want, and it's more frequently updated, too.

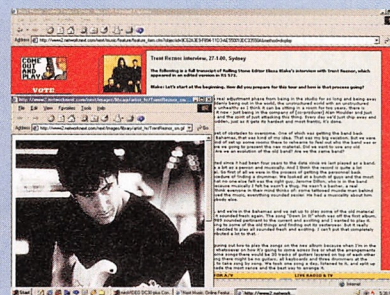
Hyper has always had a loose association with Hyperactive, but improvements to the latest version mean you can expect more of the things you love about this magazine on the website.

There's plenty of eye candy, where we bring you the pick of stunning screenshots and character design from upcoming games.

There are more downloads of the latest demos available for your PC, and desktop themes and wallpapers for your favourite console games, too.

Want to test your wit and see if it's up to the standard of the Hyper caption writers? Soon you'll be able to dispose of the envelopes and stamps completely, and enter the Caption This competition online. Similarly, we'll be inviting opinions on issues raised on our Vs page. Don't agree with the Hyper verdict? Well you can check the opinion poll and see if the numbers are on your side.

Hyperactive 3.1 has the goods on all the systems - from the mysterious Dolphin, to the powerhouse X-Box. We're also covering the battle for supremacy between the Dreamcast and the PlayStation2. Check out all



this and more at
www.hyperactive.com

NetworkNEXT's other great channels include the online home of Rolling Stone Australia, and Internet.au; the ultimate source of information on Australia's burgeoning Net culture and industry.

Also in the late stages of development is Screen; set to be Australia's premier online source of movie and TV listings, film previews and reviews, DVD, Sci-Fi and more.

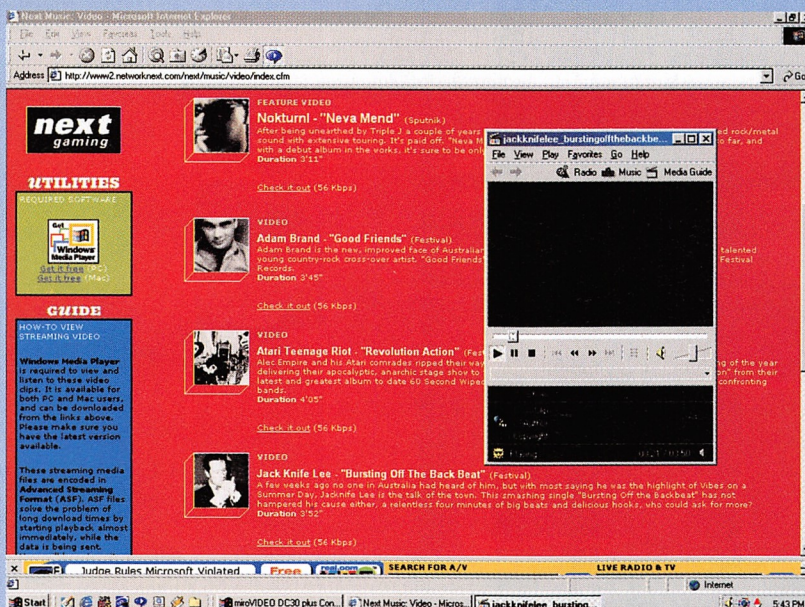


Rolling Stone Australia Online

Rolling Stone Australia Online features all the most prime elements of the print magazine - authoritative reviews, music news and gossip and the best interviews around. Mp3s and streaming video of popular bands are additional showcase features of the channel.

Frenzal Rhomb, TISM, Sonic Animation and Machine Gun Fellatio are just some of the acts online now,





Just about everything a music buff could want can be found on NetworkNext.com, and if it's not covered yet, chances are it will be in the very near future.

internet.au

Internet.au Online

Internet.au caters for everyone from the Net newbie to the industry analyst. With tutorials and software reviews to educate and inform, the site is concise and easily accessible. But for the internet-initiated, industry interviews, stock quotes and an internet job board will make Internet.au Online an invaluable resource. The job board has been created in association with HotJobs; one of the world's largest and most widely acclaimed job sites.

So whether you've just got your first e-mail account, or you're looking at moving up the corporate ladder, we've got it covered. Internet.au - the most comprehensive site in Australian netspace.



with more being added all the time. Using the Windows Media plug-in, music videos as well as extensive live footage can be streamed onto your screen without the need for a high speed cable modem or ISDN link. A standard modem connection will allow you to watch and listen to the best acts from Australia and overseas.

Rolling Stone Online's extensive database of artist biographies has the answer to those annoying trivia questions like "Who was Pearl Jam's first drummer" and the majority of CD reviews come complete with track listings and recommended tracks.

Due to space constraints, celebrity interviews in Rolling Stone often have to be cut down. Rolling Stone Australia Online features full interview transcripts. Check out



feature interviews with music industry greats including Trent Reznor, Killing Heidi and The Chemical Brothers. Regular updates will make this one page you'll want to visit frequently.



NetworkNEXT in association with 25meg.com invite you to express yourself on their new discussion forums.

Rant or rave with a whole world of likeminded people from Sydney to Siberia. Join in spirited debate about the quality of ISPs, learn how to conquer that elusive last level on your favourite game, or have a friendly natter about the joys of sax - there are topics for everyone - and their dog.

Our discussion forums are fun and easy to use - simply sign up and you'll be posting messages in no time.

NetworkNEXT discussion forums can be found on the networkNEXT site www.networknext.com as well as www.hyperactive.com

Rolling Stone Australia discussion forum

Who should be on the cover of the next issue? Who's got THE worst haircut in the world of music?

Get it all off your chest by clicking



on the Discussion link on the Rolling Stone site or point your browser to <http://discuss.25meg.com/music/index.cfm>

Internet.au discussion forum

Pesky computer playing up again? Got a gripe about the cost of software, the bugs in your browser or the service of your ISP? Can't find the thingumajig to go in the whamsacallit?

Visit the Internet.au discussion forum via the Discussion link on the site or head to <http://discuss.25meg.com/internet/index.cfm> where all will be revealed.

NEXTgaming discussion forum

Next level so close and yet so far? In desperate need of a cheat sheet

before you go to sleep? Are handhelds a thing of the past or the future in gaming?

Check on the state of play on the NEXTgaming site by following the links on the site, or visit the boards direct <http://discuss.25meg.com/games/index.cfm>

NEXTScreen Discussion Forum

Who has the best hair in Hollywood? Buffy the Vampire Slayer ñ cult or crap? Who did win the 1980 Best Actor Oscar?

Big screen, small screen - if you can watch it, you can discuss it on NEXTScreen discussion forums ñ coming soon to a screen near you.

Link from the upcoming Screen

channel on networknext or go directly to <http://discuss.25meg.com/screen/index.cfm>

For more information about the discussion forums on networkNEXT, mail discuss@networknext.com

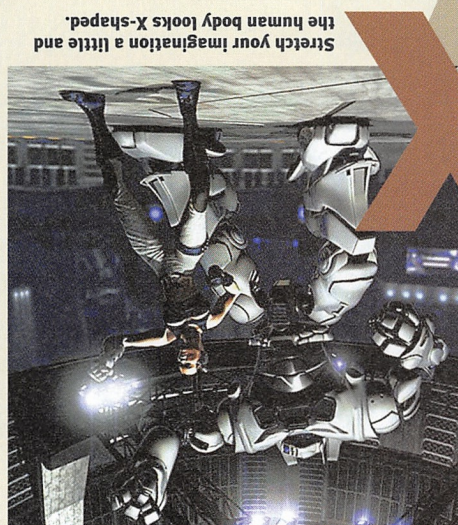
CHAT!

Look out for regular live chat events with game developers, famous bands and screen stars. Beginning late April each channel on networknext will be holding moderated chats with celebrities as well as live events like trivia quizzes with great prizes.

Check out www.networknext.com for the latest chat schedule.

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Stretch your imagination a little and the human body looks X-shaped.

X It was one of the world's worst kept secrets. No one was terribly surprised that Bill Gates and the Microsoft machine were looking to muscle in on the converging console/set-top box market, but for a long time anyone asking questions to clarify the rumours about X-Box was met with a "no comment" from those in the know.

But now it's official, the X-Box is real. Or at least it will be by the third quarter of next year.

As expected, Gates announced the Microsoft console on March 10 at the annual Game

Developers Conference in San Jose, California, to an enthusiastic crowd of thousands of industry types and media. Coming just days after Sony's launch of the PlayStation 2 in Japan, the timing was spot on from a strategic point of view. Microsoft adopted a line that's become familiar in the competitive world of entertainment technology: "Don't buy from our competitors now, we have something better that will be released eventually."

Out of the box, the console will come standard with four game controller ports, a DVD player, a hard drive, and broadband Internet access (it will be able to support a modem as an add-on), with a keyboard and mouse as optional peripherals.

It's a real console

Gates emphasised that the X-Box, despite its components and operating system (a version of the Windows 2000 kernel), would not just be a PC-lite. He promised that it will

be a true console - that is, a stable platform with no boot times and non-customisable, complete games with no patches. He also assured

developers that the X-Box would in no way cannibalise the market for PC games by pointing out the different type of games that succeed in each market. After the announcement, Don Coyner, director of marketing in the newly formed Microsoft Games division extrapolated on this:

"The PC and X-Box are complementary devices. Each has very distinct audiences,"

Coyner said. "PC games are more cerebral, while console games are more visceral. If you look at the top 10 games lists for these two platforms, you'll see that they don't really match up." The most popular PC games of 1999 include Age of Empires II, Half-Life, and SimCity 3000, while the most popular console games of 1999 include Pokemon Snap, Gran Turismo, and Final Fantasy VIII.

So, you might ask, why is Australia's premier PC gaming magazine doing a big feature on a console? Well, there are many reasons, but the main one is that Microsoft's latest move will affect even the most dedicated PC-only gamers out there.

Still vapourware

Microsoft owns the operating system used by most of the world's computers, their API sets - including the gaming specific DirectX - are already in use by most of the world's developers and Microsoft themselves are responsible for quite a few successful games of their own.

These are just some of the reasons given for why Microsoft believe they can succeed in the console business. But at the moment, despite a lot of hype and excitement, the X-Box itself is still vapourware.

The specs are certainly impressive, but of all the eye candy videos shown at the conference only a few were running in realtime, and these were said to be done on a box using nVidia's upcoming NV15 graphics card for the PC.

According to Gates, the custom nVidia chip to be used in the X-Box will be "three generations beyond the best graphics chips that are shipping inside the PC right now." It will be a 300Mhz clock capable of a polygon throughput of around 300 million a second. But sceptics are saying this is just one of the specs that is likely to change before the final launch. nVidia has a reputation for announcing great performance specs for their upcoming products and then, just before launch, revising those specs downward to reflect the actual final product.

Then there's also the fact that Microsoft aren't traditionally involved in any hardware manufacture, which may or may not work in their favour. They do have some experienced partners on board with nVidia for the graphics chip and Intel on the processor front, but whether Microsoft can bring all these PC style components together into a stable dedicated games console remains to be seen.

Frag and defrag

Another part of the announcement that's prompting more questions is the inclusion of a hard drive inside the box. Gates described the potential of an inbuilt hard drive for new games features, telling developers they can use this for getting around RAM limitations without having to go back out to the DVD to get information during a game.

"It's a real constraint in designing these games. Well, when you put an 8-gigabyte disk drive on here, you can stream in new information interactively, so the user doesn't even notice that you're going out to get those extra capabilities. It's as simple as saying, can you do audio commentary during a sports type game and have it be appropriate to what's going on in the field," he said.

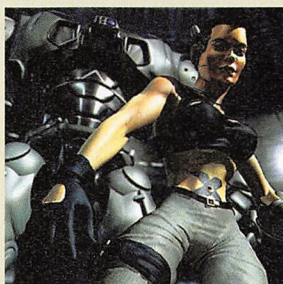
But he didn't go into technical details on how problems with defragmentation and cross-linked files might be addressed. With the hard drive also comes the problem of durability. Consoles usually cop quite a beating in the rough environment of the living room, and your average hard drive wouldn't stand up to this kind of treatment for long.

Quality control

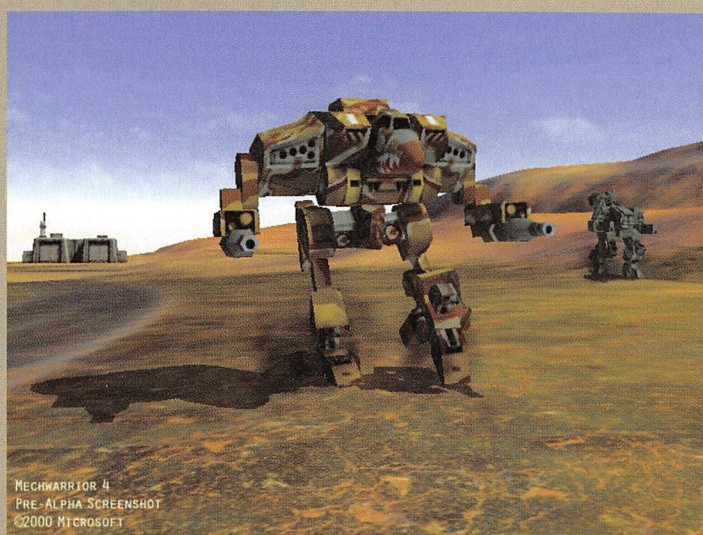
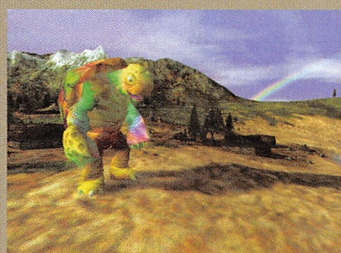
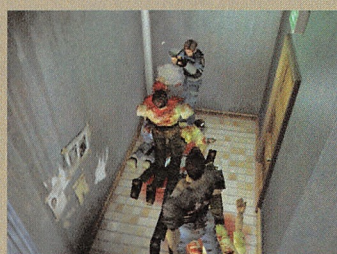
Even with the details kind of sketchy at the moment many developers have expressed interest - if not excitement - at the prospect of developing for the X-Box. And why not? Any developer familiar with developing for PC is going to have a pretty easy time with the X-Box once development kits are sent out.

On the issue of X-Box ports of PC games, Coyner

While some of the X-Box demos were realtime, this one was pre-rendered.



Behind every great woman is a hulking great robot, apparently.



Software sells consoles. With developers and publishers of the calibre shown here already signed up, the X-Box should be graced by some great games at its launch. Clockwise from top left: Namco (Ridge Racer V), Konami (Metal Gear Solid), Capcom (Resident Evil), id Software (Quake 3), Microsoft (Mechwarrior IV), Bungie (Halo), Lionhead (Black & White), and Relic (Homeworld).

X-Box Technical Analysis and Comparison

Console	Microsoft X-Box	Nintendo Dolphin	Playstation 2	Sega Dreamcast
CPU	600mhz Intel x86	+400mhz IBM PowerPC Processor	300mhz 128-Bit 'Emotion Engine'	200mhz Yamaha SH4
Combined Memory	64 MB	Not known	32 MB RAMBUS	26 MB
Graphics Subsystem	Custom nVidia X-Chip	Not known	150 mhz 'Graphics Synthesiser'	66mhz NEC PowerVR
Storage	8 GB Hard Disk and 8 MB Memory Card	Not known	8 MB Memory Card. Hard Disk in development	128 KB Memory Card. Hard Disk in development
Optical Media	4x DVD-ROM with movie playback	DVD-ROM	2x DVD-ROM with movie playback	10x GD-ROM (1 GB Discs)
Connectivity	Broadband (integrated 100 Mbits NIC)	Not known	Broadband (support for Cable/DSL)	Integrated 33.6k modem
Operating System	Windows 2000 Kernel with DirectX 8	Not known	Proprietary Sony OS	Proprietary Sega OS, or Windows CE 2.0

We have not included the PC in our comparison table, as its specifications are constantly evolving. Besides, the PC is not in direct competition with anything from Microsoft, Nintendo, Sony or Sega. Since a top of the line PC features technology comparable to the X-Box right now, you may assume that the PC of late 2001 will give the nascent X-Box a decent run for its money. Either way, a lot can change in 18 months.

What's in the box?

HUGH NORTON-SMITH ANALYSES EXACTLY HOW THE X-BOX SHAPES UP TO ITS CONSOLE COMPETITORS

CPU: 600MHz Intel CPU

■ Early rumours suggested that the X-Box would feature an AMD Athlon processor.

However, in a last minute decision, AMD was dropped in favour of Intel. Concerns over availability and pricing were the chief reasons.

Both the Dreamcast and PlayStation 2 use proprietary microprocessors as their CPU. Not so with the X-Box. The X-Box will use a modified Intel Pentium III processor, with full x86 architecture. With any luck, Intel's offering will be highly customised, rather than just a rehash of the current Pentium III architecture. As you know, x86 processors have been around since the debut of Intel's 8086 processor.

By using an Intel chip, Microsoft has ensured that the X-Box will have widespread compatibility. Cross platform translation is a surprisingly important issue. Writing games on the PC platform is a cinch compared to writing games on other platforms. Like the Nintendo 64 and the Jaguar, the PS2 requires a lot of highly complex low level programming to maximise the system's potential. Unfortunately, developers are often too busy or incapable of optimising a

ANY DEVELOPER FAMILIAR WITH THE PC IS GOING TO HAVE A PRETTY EASY TIME WITH THE X-BOX

piece of software for any given system. Game developers are familiar with the PC environment. There are plenty of PC development tools available, so recompiling and debugging the X-Box should be a relatively simple task.

On the flip side, x86's legacy architecture does introduce a series of problems. Primarily, the Pentium III was not intended for gaming devices, but as an all-round processor. In fact, despite the addition of SSE instructions, the floating-point performance of the Pentium III leaves a lot to be



Bill's office - extravagant or what?

said that it would depend entirely on what kind of game it was and whether it fit into the console market. Microsoft will be doing concept approval of all games with a quality control stance somewhere between that of Nintendo and Sony.

They're looking to develop about 30% of all X-Box titles in-house, and they'll need some big hits here to make back the money they're inevitably going to lose on each X-Box.

In order to keep the retail price at an acceptable level Microsoft will have to take a loss on each hardware unit just like Sony did with their first PlayStation and are doing now with the PlayStation2. The business model works much like low-end PCs being given away free with long-term internet access plans - it's supporting the user with ongoing services and product that produces the revenue. This is something that Microsoft understands well.

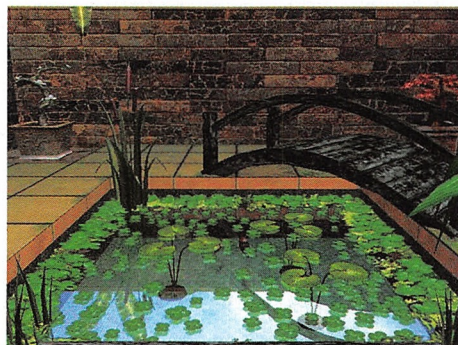
The X Factor

If there are enough units sold (and with Microsoft's marketing budget and proposed cheap price point for the X-Box, there's no reason there won't be) the X-Box will be the most successful American console since the Atari 2600. Or it could bomb like the 3DO, the CDI or the Jaguar.

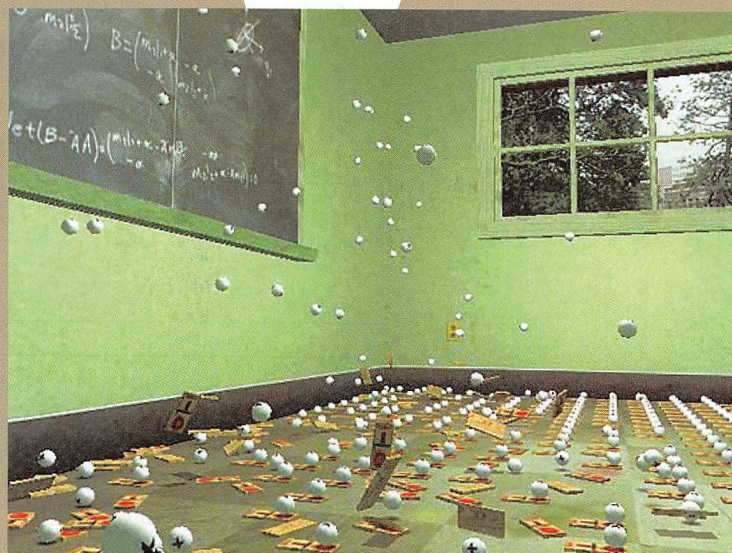
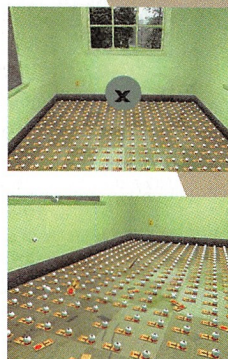
The fact is that it's way too early to tell. If they manage to produce the console to the current specs and get some great games published for it, they shouldn't have too much trouble finding an audience. Dedicated PC gamers,

however, aren't going to be forgotten by Microsoft and its ubiquitous Windows. In fact, Bill Gates probably won't stop until he's gotten Windows inside every piece of electronic equipment with more than two transistors.

PC gaming will always be on the cutting edge of technology, and for those not afraid of the words "installation", "drivers" and "fatal error" gaming on a high-end PC is always going to offer more fun (and frustration) than any console. ■



THE NVIDIA GRAPHICS CHIPSET WILL BE THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE CONSOLE



Subliminal advertising for Mouse Hunt on DVD?

desired. The Pentium III is also a 32-bit device. In contrast, both the Playstation 2 and Dreamcast use a far more streamlined 128-bit processor, built from the ground up for games. Although this doesn't always reflect performance, a 128-bit processor has significantly more throughput than a comparable 32-bit processor.

A lot of PC users have expressed doubt with regard to the speed of the CPU featured in the X-Box - undeniably, a 600mhz Pentium III is hardly cutting edge, even today. So what will it be like by the end of 2001? Surely we'll all be using 2 GHz processors by then? In fact, the answer is that the CPU won't be shouldering most of the load. The nVidia graphics chipset, capable of a staggering 1 trillion operations per second, will be the driving force behind the console.

Graphics: nVidia NV25 X-Chip

■ Even the most ardent Microsoft cynics will agree that nVidia can produce a quality graphics card: the nVidia chips on the near horizon are simply awe-inspiring. Besides raw performance, nVidia chips are typically feature-rich. This powerhouse graphics processor will be capable of full screen anti-aliasing, texture compression and environmental bump mapping. With nVidia's

current nVidia GeForce256 processor nipping at the heels of the Sony Emotion Engine, we can only imagine the muscle of the NV25 X-Chip.

Memory: 64MB DDRAM

■ The generous 64MB of RAM on the X-Box dwarfs the 32MB featured on the PS2. The extra memory has two major benefits. First, it translates into richer environments. For example, developers can use larger textures, include far more sound effects or increase the detail of in-game models. Second, extra memory can boost framerates, by pre-calculating and storing results. Consoles require far less memory than their PC counterpart. Without a large background operating system, consoles have a far lower memory overhead. The Playstation, for instance, has a meagre 2MB of system RAM, yet can perform above and beyond a Pentium system with 16MB. Bill Gates has confirmed that the X-Box will incorporate hardware texture compression. Texture compression allows developers to include super-rich textures into games. Most compression algorithms, most notably S3TC, allow for a compression ration of 4:1. Essentially, this will quadruple the memory available to developers. Surprisingly, texture compression also makes rendering faster, as it lowers the required bandwidth.

Optical Media: 4x DVD-ROM

■ While holding far more than a conventional CD-ROM, the X-Box's DVD drive was primarily developed to avoid rampant piracy. The 4x DVD drive will be highly optimised, allowing for almost non-existent loading times. Although it hasn't been announced, the X-Box DVD drive will almost certainly be able to playback DVD films.

Storage: 8GB Hard Disk

■ As well as being able to save game data,

users will be able to download MP3s, web pages and centrefolds from Wee Jock's Online Sheep Emporium. Gates also revealed at the GDC that a hard drive would let end-users download game demos. Hard disk transfer rates are significantly faster than DVD transfers; as such the hard disk would make an ideal place to store frequently used game data.

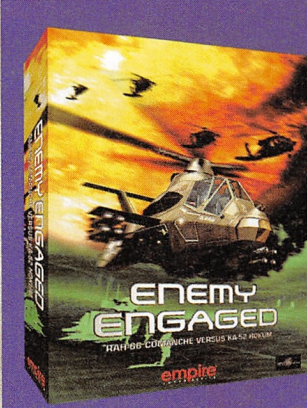
Connectivity: Broadband

■ We were overjoyed to hear that the X-Box will come with a built in 10/100 Mbit Networking Card. Although this could be used for home networking, it will be used principally as a broadband interface. With the growing popularity of ADSL, Cable and Satellite networks, the X-Box looks set to challenge PCs in the online gaming arena. You will also be able to use it for high-speed web browsing, downloading new game data (addon levels etc) and sending email. If you're unable to get broadband access, an optional 56k modem will be released at the same time as the console.


Operating System: Windows 2000 Kernel

■ X-Box will use an enhanced version of Microsoft's Windows 2000 operating system. Consequently, the X-Box will come with native support for the DirectX 8 and Open GL graphics libraries. This will enable quick conversions of PC games and software to X-Box, where graphical improvements and enhancements can be made to take advantage of the X-Box's kung-fu hardware. Naturally, Microsoft will highly modify Windows 2000 for the X-platform. The kernel will be explicitly linked to the hardware, eliminating the 'Blue Screens of Death' and any other Windows errata. Gates also reassured the GDC that the X-Box will not feature any boot times or software installation. The OS will be as invisible to the end user as in any other console system. ■





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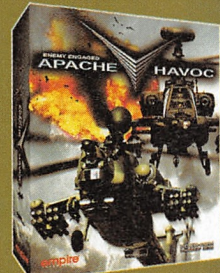
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Campaigns - 3 large scale dynamic campaigns, Smaller scale 'skirmish' games, Detailed campaign interface, 3 game difficulty levels. Plus those of Apache Havoc if it's installed.



3D Engine - Specifically designed for low level helicopter combat, Supports 640x480 to 1600x1200 screen resolutions, Supports hardware transform and lighting.

Multiplayer - Internet, LAN, Serial, Modem.

Compatibility With 'Enemy Engaged: Apache Havoc - If Apache Havoc is installed then you can fly the Apache and Havoc gunships and Play the Apache Havoc campaigns.

The time for war IS over, here comes the real thing

by **LARRY STURGIS** War Correspondent:

Until now pilots training for combat have relied on a super realistic flight simulation, know as Enemy Engaged. This has; two fully simulated, fully armed helicopters US RAH_66 Comanche and Russian Ka-52 Hokum-B.

Cockpits - Highly detailed virtual cockpits - views include your co-pilot/gunner, Fly as pilot or gunner, Fully animated crew.

Flight Dynamics - Authentic flight dynamics accurately recreate the individual handling aspects of each helicopter, Configuration options available.

Systems - Precision avionics and displays, Novice and realistic avionics options, System damage, Authentic weapons, Hokum ejector seats.

Real Combat Areas -

Lebanon - The US step in to stop the production of weapons of mass destruction. **Taiwan** - The Chinese invasion.

Yemen - a border war with Saudi Arabia.

Real Terrain - Modelled on real digital maps with hills, trees and buildings to hide behind, Vast combat zones, Tactical installations (airfields, military bases, etc.), Strategic installations (power stations, oil refineries, etc.)





COMM

Move along, soldier! Briefing begins in one minute!

DETAILS

- Genre: Strategy
- Players: 1-8
- Developer: Pyro Studios
- Publisher: Eidos
- Due: Late 2000

Scene: Somewhere deep in a World War II bunker...

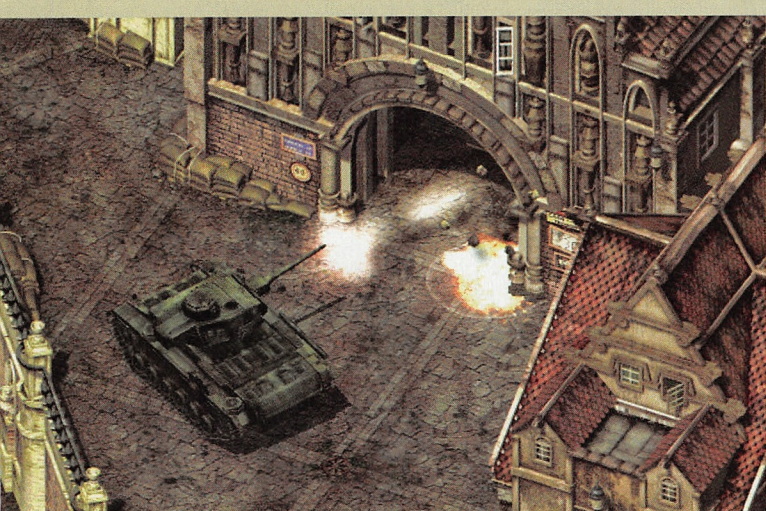
Maj. Wilcox: At-ten-shun! Alright then soldiers, good to see everyone here on time for a change. In today's briefing we'll be covering a highly confidential file of

information that was recently intercepted on its way across the Pacific. It appears some forces we experienced trouble with a few years ago are planning another attack in this area. The good news is you won't be working alone on this operation, we're calling in the same elite team of soldiers from the previous missions, the Commandos. To prepare you for this task, it's best we familiarise you with some background data, along with what we've learned of this latest planned attack. Prepare

once again to meet the Commandos...

"Lights please, now roll the reconnaissance film, Jenkins"

For those unfamiliar with the concept of the earlier games, Behind Enemy Lines and the Beyond the Call of Duty extra missions, they centred around the Commandos, a group of World War II era specially-trained soldiers that were better known as the "Dirty Half-Dozen". As their team leader, you were responsible



(left) Fortunately, the pier served as an adequate landing strip. Although, it was originally several hundred metres long. But never mind.

COMMANDOS 2

for the actions of every one of them, including each of their specific skills. As a rule, not all commandos participated in each mission - usually only three or four of them were at your disposal. Missions included such tasks as destroying certain buildings or objects, capturing a particular enemy soldier, or freeing a fellow commando. Typically, a mission would have a few objectives that needed to be completed for the mission to be a success. Unlike other realtime strategy games, you didn't approach the mission with all guns blazing, shooting at anyone that moves. Rather, you

used stealth to get the job done. For example, taking out an enemy soldier with your gun meant other nearby soldiers would hear the shots, sound the alarm and soon have the place crawling with panicking guards. So, a combination of careful planning, near silent operations, and most importantly, covering your tracks was the only way to succeed in the missions. The overall goal, of course, was to thwart the German war effort by means of sabotage and tactical genius. This may sound easy, but owing to the open structure of the missions, there was always more than one way to

successfully complete the objective. This feature enabled missions to be completed time and time again, in hope of the perfect score.

"Err, lights again thanks Jenkins"

Right, there we have it, well the history lesson over with, let's not waste another minute. Moving onto the current issue at hand, and the impending invasion of this enemy once again...

'Commandos 2' is the code name for this up and coming operation, with a subtitle that's still classified information. The action

will again take place in the World War II era, only this time the locations of the missions are spread over a much larger geographical area. It will be necessary to return to Northern Europe, as well as parts of Normandy, North Africa, and then finally on to fight a new enemy based in the Pacific region. From the early maps we've sighted of the confirmed locations, these new environments will contain some of the most highly detailed visuals the commandos have ever seen.

Although you'll be viewing the action from the same top-down isometric angle as before, each ►



RELIVE THE CLASSICS

Old black and white war movies have been cited as the visual inspiration behind a number of the key locations in the new missions. Familiar scenes include the fortress in *The Colditz Story*, a cliff top like that in *The Guns of Navarone*, a tunnelling scene from *The Great Escape*, and a recognisable landmark from *Bridge Over River Kwai*.

Interior scenes such as this can be viewed by rotating the camera through a full 360 degrees.



Know thine enemy. Or better still, know thine enemy's tailor - those uniforms are snazzy!

► location is now created in an accurate 3D environment. Additionally, there will be a choice of four separate fixed camera angles from which to view the action. Naturally, this will enable you to keep an even closer eye on your team members as they disappear behind a building, for instance.

The attention to detail doesn't just stop at the static objects either. Your team will need to come to terms with fully featured vehicles such as jeeps that shake on their suspension with

Missions will not only take place around the outside of various buildings and structures, but it will now be necessary to venture inside many of these structures, moving from room to room, and floor to floor. Once inside a structure, the commando will then have a full 360 degree perspective of the inside area. This will provide both a defensive course of action when in need of somewhere to retreat, and also a strategic way of placing a team member in certain vantage spots, perhaps high up in a building with windows, ready to pick off the enemy below.

the Dirty Half-Dozen should definitely return to serve duty once again. These of course included the Green Beret, the Marine, the Driver, the Sapper, the Sniper, and the Spy. However the team has now grown with the addition of three members: Natasha, formally of the Dutch Resistance, returns from her term with the team during *Beyond the Call of Duty*; there's also a thief to aid the team, with his ability to sneak into areas and 'remove' items the team need; and the final member of the team is a military trained dog, who will be able to transport items between members, such as medical aids.

The way the team's individual skills are used is similar to previous missions, where you will still need to use certain members for particular tasks. Though since then the whole team has undergone intensive training, and can now all do a number of similar tasks, including swimming and driving certain vehicles (although I might need to check the dog's qualifications on that last one). Other new abilities picked up during training include diving, climbing telegraph poles, jumping through windows, and

"...AND THE FINAL MEMBER OF THE TEAM IS A MILITARY TRAINED DOG..."

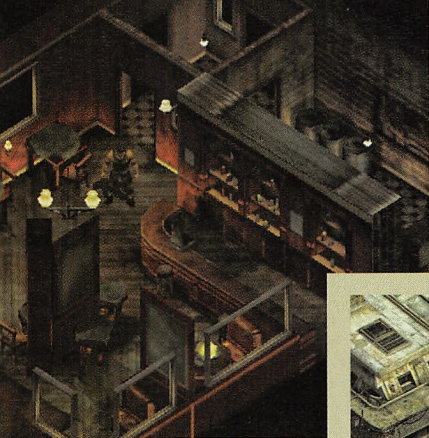
every bump in the war torn streets, and tanks that can manoeuvre with pinpoint accuracy owing to their independently rotating tank tracks and turrets.

However, there is one area of detail for which your team will need the most preparation.

At this point it might be wise to present each of you with a file on the commandos themselves.

"Hand these out would you Jenkins"

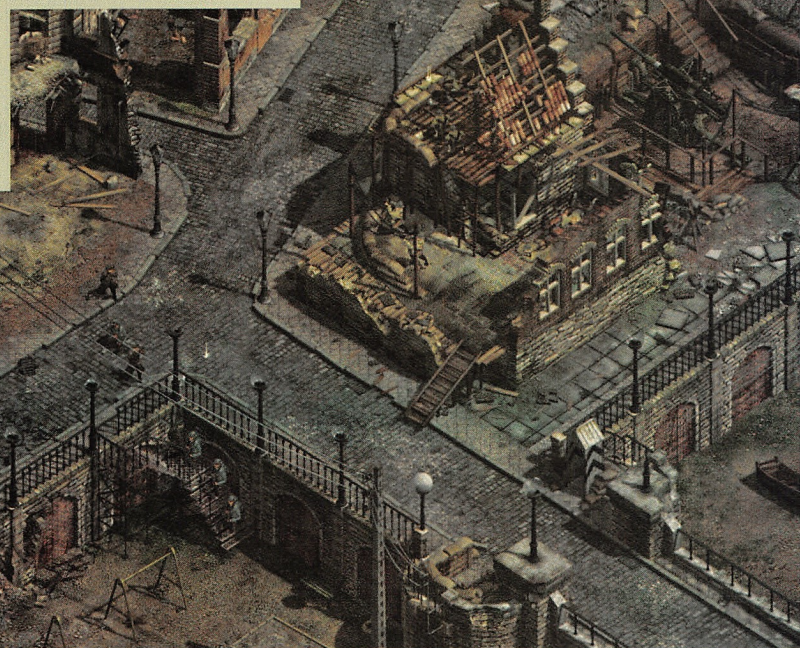
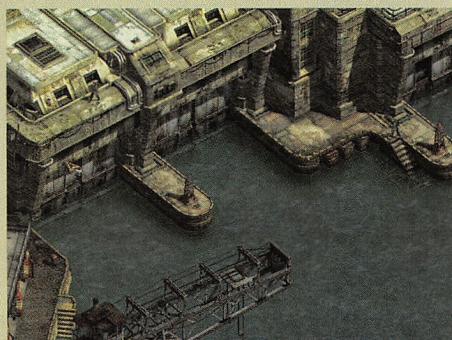
With the success of the previous missions, it was felt that



Crawling through the plentiful debris still provides a useful amount of cover for your men.



Stealth is always an option. Our hidden hero waits for the enemy patrol to pass before making his move.



manoeuvring along high-tension wire cables. To cap off this training, the team members successfully went through an intensive course in exchanging weapons and tools from their inventories with each other during missions. This has also prepared them for the new feature where they will be able to equip themselves prior to a mission, based on the requirements.

"Ah, what's that Jenkins? What missions? Oh yes, of course, the Missions!"

Well naturally, you'll all be expected to take part in a series of gruelling, yet essential training missions at the start, to enable those of you who will be enrolling for the first time to understand the basics. Then expect the first few missions to take you through somewhat of a learning curve, easing you into the tactical style of action. Then, of course, after that you can expect all hell to break loose.

Details are still sketchy about the final number of missions to be featured, but our sources tell us it could be around ten. Yet this doesn't factor in the new focus on

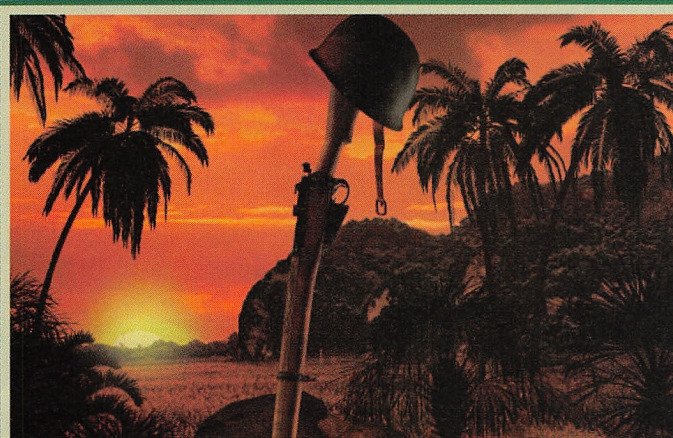
action that takes place entirely inside buildings, plus a newly introduced split mission structure, which will see the first half of missions requiring radically different strategic implications to the second half.

"I can sense you troops are becoming a little restless, so I'll wrap it up quickly."

All in all, this new mission is shaping up to be the greatest challenge this platoon has ever faced. You'll be exposed to brand new environments of unprecedented detail, you'll be expected to know how to operate a range of new weapons and vehicles, and your tactical skills will be put to the utmost test. While some fine-tuning is still going on with Commandos 2 behind closed doors, the go-ahead for this mission is looking certain for the 3rd quarter of this year. My advice to you soldiers is to head back to training camp immediately, and we'll let you know when you'll be required for duty.

"That'll be all, class dismissed, now Jenkins, where's my afternoon tea?"

Mike Wilcox



MISSION BRIEFING

"For all those who turned up late to the briefing, I've left a quick summary on the whiteboard."

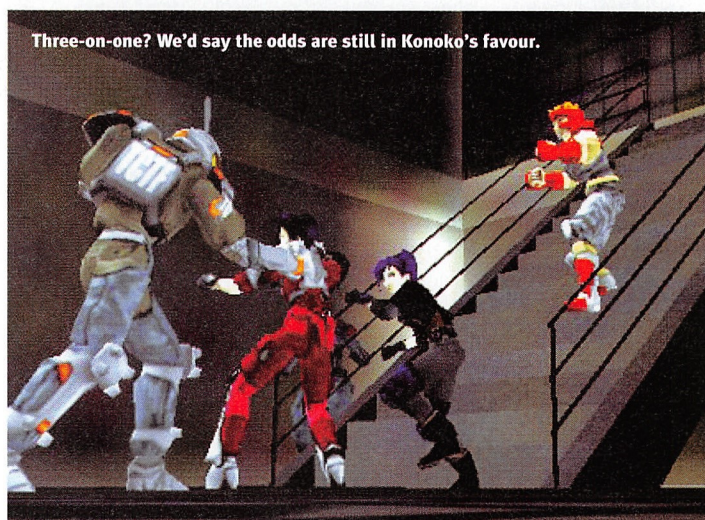
Naturally, you'll need to know as much as possible about your enemy. From the files we've received, they now appear to have improved artificial intelligence, some fancy new 3D logic, and a location memory. These skills will enable them to return to previously heated battle locations, and also remember where they last saw members of your team.

Should any of you either request or require the assistance of backup for a mission, the multiplayer options should not be overlooked. Scenarios available include one team defending an area while another plans a raid on it. There will also be a competitive cooperative mode where both teams must try to complete the mission first. These modes could involve up to eight players, and be carried out over a LAN or the Internet.



Meanwhile, down at the old warehouse...

鬼 ONI



Three-on-one? We'd say the odds are still in Konoko's favour.

IF THERE'S ONE THING WE DON'T SEE NEARLY ENOUGH OF ON THE PC, IT'S **JAPANESE MANGA BABES**. THANK GOD FOR KONOKO...

DETAILS

- Genre: Action
- Players: 1
- Developer: Bungie
- Publisher: Bungie
- Due: 3rd Qtr 2000

* Oni means "demon" or "devil" in Japanese. While Bungie is reluctant to reveal exactly why the name was chosen to title their forthcoming action

game, the Japanese influence at least is obvious for all to see. Citing renowned artist Masumune Shirow as a foremost source of inspiration, Bungie has drawn heavily from anime such as Akira, Gundam, Macross Plus, Evangelion, and of course Shirow's own classic, Ghost in the Shell.

But it's not only the sleek visual aesthetic of anime the American



team hopes to replicate in Oni. There's also the visceral, exaggerated violence and intense, kinetic energy exuded by the best action anime that just seems so perfectly suited to a game of Oni's nature.

As Bungie's Publicity Engineer, it's Doug Zartman's job to know everything there is about their games. I met up with him in an abandoned Tokyo subway and quizzed him about Oni.

I'm intrigued by Oni's main character, Konoko. Just who is she? She's an agent of the Tech Crimes Task Force, a law enforcement organisation that battles the high-

tech crime of the not-so-distant future. Even among the elite agents of the TCTF, Konoko is exceptionally skilled; lethal at close or long range, armed or not. Konoko eats, sleeps and breathes the TCTF.

Why did you choose her to be the star of the game? What has she got that no other game hero/ine has got?

She's got the moves, that's what she's got! Konoko is a tough, resourceful, attractive woman with dark secrets in her past. She was raised as a ward of the state, and upon graduation enrolled in law enforcement training. The ranks of

the Task Force are reserved for only the most promising law enforcers, and Konoko was hand-picked to join. Because of the extremely dangerous nature of their work, all TCTF officers undergo rigorous martial arts training, and are skilled in the use of a wide array of projectile and energy weapons.

So Oni is a kind of one-woman-against-the-world scenario, then?

Well, to help her complete her missions, Konoko has the help of an AI unit called Shinatama. Konoko is linked to Shinatama through a receiver implant that allows them to remain in constant

visual and audio contact. When Konoko goes on a mission, Shinatama is there to provide Konoko with advice and intelligence. Konoko has few friends, but in the dark, uncertain and dangerous world of Oni, she comes to rely on Shinatama for her friendship as well as her expertise.

Given Oni's obvious anime influence, I expect you've devoted much attention to the animation side of the game. Indeed, I've heard a lot about Oni's touted interpolation animation. Can you explain how it works?

Without interpolation, an

Shinatama is a robot. In Japanese schoolgirl disguise, natch...



"TRIGGERS A COOL, LEAPING-NECK-TWIST MOVE..."



The hand-to-hand combat in Oni is breathtaking. Outrageous moves like this are but a tap of the mouse away.

► animation sequence has to run through all of its steps before a new animation can begin. If a character is running, and the run sequence consists of four steps, the character will have to finish the fourth step before they can start a jump animation, for example. The effect of this is that the controls can feel unresponsive - there can be a slight but noticeable delay between when the player hits a key and when the onscreen character responds. This is especially significant in a game featuring fast, hand-to-hand combat. Interpolation allows one animation sequence to start at any point during another one, and makes the character's limbs flow smoothly from one position to another, without unnaturally popping into another position.

What cool effects does this provide for in the game?

The effect is that the onscreen character is surprisingly agile and the controls are instantly responsive. Konoko can be in the midst of a flying kick, and can twist in the air to land facing the other direction.

Speaking of character controls, thirdperson games have tended to struggle in this area. With Oni, you guys seem to have set yourselves an even greater challenge by incorporating both ranged and melee combat.

The controls are a standard first-person shooter, mouse-keyboard combination that all action gamers are familiar with. When armed, the left mouse button fires, as you would expect, and the right mouse button kicks. Unarmed, the left punches and the right kicks. The player can switch between the two modes at any time with a single key.

How complex is the hand-to-hand combat? It sounds closer to the fighting in Omikron than the likes of Tekken or Virtua Fighter.

Never played Omikron, actually, but I get the idea. In fighting games like VF or Tekken, the mastery of combos is the whole point of gameplay, and skilled players are the ones that can fire off the really complex moves at will. Oni's moves are equally cool, but easier to trigger. We don't want players to

have to memorise long strings of combo keys.

So what sort of moves and combos Konoko can string together?

One of her special moves is triggered by running forward and quickly hitting punch-kick-punch on the two mouse buttons. Simple to do, but it triggers a cool leaping-neck-twist move that is a thrill the first time you do it. Every character has their own moves, and there is skill in learning when to use specific moves, but Oni lets new players do cool things much easier than typical fighting games. Hand-to-hand is only half the action, after all.

And is action only half the game?

It's primarily an action game. The goal is to provide an action experience with the speed and intensity of any of the best shooters. We don't want players to spend long stretches of time hunting around for the right key to pick up or the right lever to pull.

I think a lot of people see Oni as fitting under the umbrella of

action/adventure simply because it's a thirdperson game with a narrative. Is it purely an action game?

There aren't any conversations with other players as a part of gameplay, though there are in-engine cutscenes in the midst of some levels. The only aspects of the game that feel like an adventure are the huge variety of character types you encounter and the vastness of the environments you're in. There is a certain amount of exploration needed in some of the environments for reconnaissance. And there are puzzles to the extent of players having to figure out if it's better to enter the fortified compound by running through the front gate with guns blazing or by sneaking over the wall. But that is a much more interesting puzzle than "figure out how to hit these three buttons to open the door."

From its effortlessly cool visual styling to the clean elegance of its interface, Oni is shaping up to be one extremely cleverly designed game. Devilishly clever, you might say.

David Wildgoose

GET A LIFE!



GAMESPOT

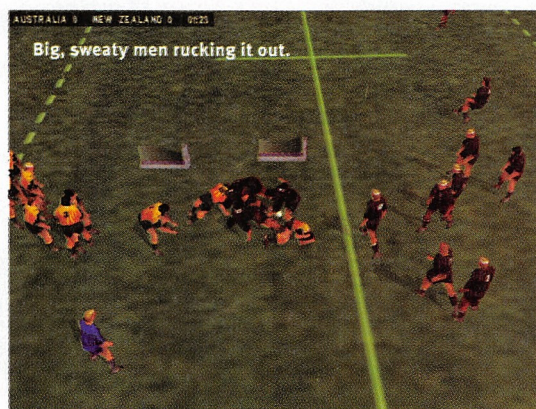
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* PREVIEWS



RUGBY

IT'S EVERY RED-BLOODED AUSSIE BLOKES DREAM - TO GET ALL HOT AND SWEATY IN A SCRUM

DETAILS

■ **Genre:** Rugby Union Sim

■ **Players:** 1-4

■ **Developer:** EA Sports

■ **Publisher:** EA Sports

■ **Due:** 3rd Qtr 2000

* Rugby Union is yet another sport we Australians can be proud of. Our national team are the reigning world champs, and their roots stem from, undeniably, the most competitive national league anywhere in the world. During the last few years whilst the ARU has enjoyed immense national success, a group of rugby fans have sneakily been working towards providing us with what appears to be the most realistic

representation of Rugby Union ever witnessed on a PC monitor. Scheduled for release in July, Rugby 2000 is almost in our grasp. We spoke to Derek Proud, producer of the game, to help appease our mounting curiosity.

Accurate

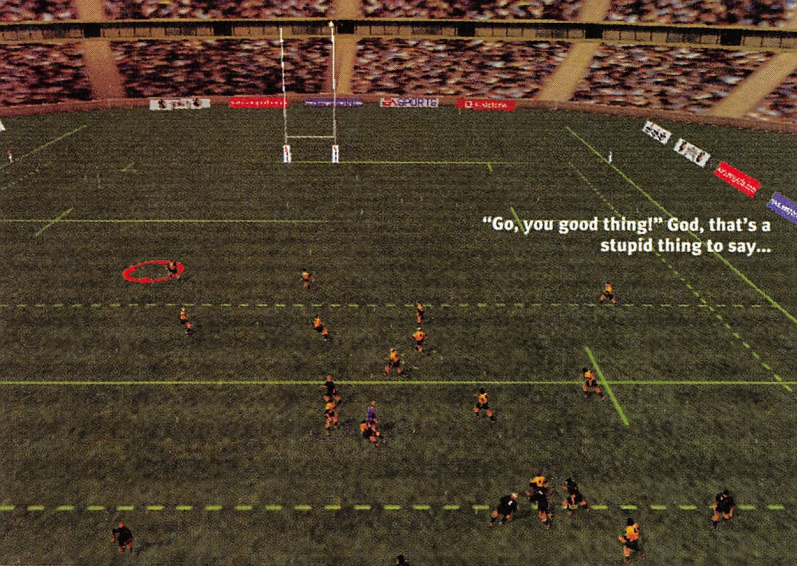
With the challenge of recreating the physics of the average rugby match - a daunting task for any level of programmer - the crew from EA have drawn from their previous successes with "team & ball" flavoured titles to ensure Rugby 2000 plays and feels like a bona fide game o' Union. From the beta code we had a chance to play with, it must be said that at this stage of development, the

dynamics of the game come together very well.

"We have taken great care that each part of the real game of rugby that we've modelled is as close to reality as we can make it (gravity is 9.81 m/s²s, players running at realistic speeds, motion captured data, etc)," explains Derek. "We have also included a pack model based on the statistical properties of the players involved (weight, strength, stamina, fitness and aggression).

The attention to detail carries over to rucking the ball. "A major part of rucking in the game is deciding how many players you wish to add to the ruck, assuming there is available support," continues Derek. "This encourages

players to 'take a tackle' if there isn't a good pass option available but you do have good pack support - just like the real thing! You are also in control, as with the scrum, of whether you want your pack to push to make ground (which diminishes the pack 'energy') or dig to try and halt a rampant opponent pack. Scrums can also be wheeled to create different attacking and defensive opportunities. The hardest part was getting motion capture data for groups of big guys getting involved in scrums. We had these big guys with tiny light sensitive markers on them underneath the motion capture rig. Every time they got stuck into a scrum, all the light sensitive markers fell off their



"Go, you good thing!" God, that's a stupid thing to say...

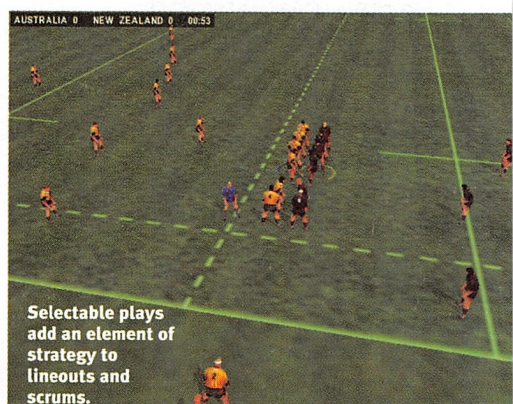


An attractive sheep in the crowd proved to be the All Blacks downfall.

Ball has been passed forward by T. Umaga
Scrum to AUSTRALIA



Stadiums are accurately represented in exacting detail.



Selectable plays add an element of strategy to lineouts and scrums.

2000

FULL OF FIFTEEN OTHER HOT AND SWEATY BLOKES...



shirts and onto the floor. It was a struggle to get them to scrum more gently."

Strategy is somewhat lacking at this early stage, but we have been assured that it will definitely play a role in Rugby 2000. "There is a large strategic element to the game," says Derek. "At lineouts and scrums the player has a choice from four selectable offensive and defensive 'set plays'. From the menus the selection of set plays are available so a player can customise their 'dynamic team control'."

Easy

Not only have the physics received a lot of attention during the development process - the

graphics of Rugby 2000 are also top notch. Whilst not immensely detailed from an up-close perspective, the player models appear very realistic when viewed using a wider angle. The

animation is also quite smooth and fluid - continuity between frames has been engineered fantastically.

Gameplay is quite easy to pick-up - a few minutes play will easily see anyone rucking and scrumming with the flair of our very own Wallabies. The game also includes a tutorial-style set of

training lessons, which teach all the basics of Rugby Union. Match difficulty is set dynamically with the player assistance available only on a lower setting whilst a challenging level will force players

are all the major national competitions, from the fictitious Calcutta Cup which sees England and Scotland battle it out in a best of three series, to the Rugby World Cup itself. Player performance is

"A FEW MINUTES PLAY WILL EASILY SEE ANYONE RUCKING AND SCRUMMING WITH FLAIR"

to rely more on their skill. And as is tradition with any EA Sports title these days, matches in Rugby 2000 are accompanied with play-by-play commentary.

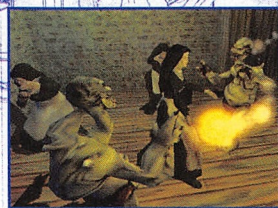
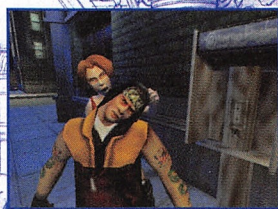
Boks

All the national Rugby teams have been included in the game, as

recreated according to their real life counterparts, and as such, teams like the All Blacks will generally outweigh the likes of Namibia.

Rugby 2000, at this early stage, is shaping up to be a winner. Judging from what we've seen so far, Rugby fans are in for a real treat.

Edward Fox



VAMPIRE

The Masquerade: Redemption

WHILE MOST OF THE ATTENTION ON **VAMPIRE** HAS CENTRED ON ITS UNIQUE MULTIPLAYER MODE, WE TAKE A LOOK AT AN EARLY VERSION OF THE SINGLE PLAYER GAME.

DETAILS

- **Genre:** Horror Fantasy RPG
- **Players:** 1-Multi
- **Developer:** Nihilistic
- **Publisher:** Activision
- **Due:** June

* Vampire the Masquerade, the PC game, has long been awaited by the games community, none more eagerly than the avid fans of the pen and paper RPG. After much delay, a preview code - or beta - finally skulked its way into the offices of PowerPlay and, well, things aren't quite as we thought. But before we dive into the game itself, let's have a quick history lesson. The learning curve is steep, but I'm sure you can keep up.

Begat vampires

In the early 90s, the pen and paper roleplaying market was

falling into a slump. D&D was still chugging along - old, reliable, unaware of the fate that it would soon be blundering into; Shadowrun had pretty much said everything it could about the world; ICE had seemed to completely shut down, and Chaosium was first beginning to shift emphasis to fiction. Then along came the remnants of a company called Lion Rampant, now using the name White Wolf, with a horror game drawing inspiration from Anne Rice, Nancy Collins and it's own dose of biblical style drama. Thus was Vampire the Masquerade created, and it hit the slow industry like a truck.

The basic premise was that Cain, brother of Abel, was punished for his fratricide by drinking blood and exploding like six kg of semtex at sunlight. He in

turn created vampires, who in turn created more vampires. Now called the Kindred, these second and third generations turned savagely on each other and Cain removed himself from the world. The remaining third generation sired other children, whose own children then became known as Clans. Named after the progenitors, the Clans have stood throughout the millennia as the basic vampiric social unit.

Ever since, the Kindred have secretly ruled the earth, playing mortals like puppets for their own games. This continued until the Inquisition, where they broke much of the power of the vampires, leading to a policy of hiding, of creating the fictions of vampires, of monsters, letting myth control the truth. This policy, implemented by a huge conclave

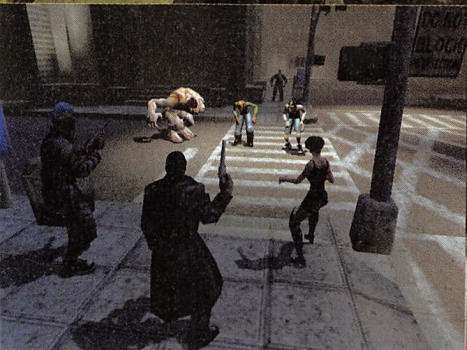
of the Kindred, was called the Masquerade. The only challenger to this rule of silence is a group of monstrous beast vampires ruled by renegade clans called the Sabbat.

More Templars

OK. Got all that? Good. Because the game goes a hell of a lot smoother if you have this presumed knowledge. You start the game as a Norman (or French) Crusader knight, presumably a Templar judging by the garb worn by main character Christof. Wounded in Eastern Europe, he cannot continue his war, and so stays behind to be nursed by a beautiful young nun. When her Convent is attacked by hideous beasts called Slatzcha (which should prick up the attention of the hardcore fans), Christof must battle his way to their silver mines



Human/Unicorn hybrids were foolhardy enough to take on any opponent.



"MULTIPLAYER INVOLVES THE CRAFTING OF STORYLINES AND ENVIRONMENTS"

by order of a sinister bishop, before embracing his destiny as Wamphyri. Ultimately, his quest will take him throughout medieval Europe and into modern times.

When I started playing, the actual nature of the gameplay came as something of a surprise. Sure, it is still in the beta stage of development, as I said earlier, but my surprise isn't due to the usual bugs and unbalanced gameplay. For months the PR advances had been promising that Vampire would be akin to playing a pen and paper RPG, with all the freedom on play and interaction this should entail. Instead, in all honesty, so far the game looks alarmingly like Diablo or Darkstone.

Ghoulish voices

It's extremely pretty, certainly. The town in which the plot begins

is a beautifully rendered and developed environment, keeping within the milieu admirably. The interface is simple, quickly learned and enhances the experience of the story by keeping out of its way. The ambient music technique is cleverly used at a quiet level, making the subtle shifts in game atmosphere all the more intriguing.

Against that, the voice acting is full of more ham and cheese than a Hawaiian pizza. The main character, supposedly a French Aristocrat, comes off as Luke Skywalker whining about power converters, while the monsters sound like slightly irritated cows rather than dangerous, flesh-crafted ghouls. Even the old Gypsy woman sounds like a character from Black Adder. Some light comic relief is all very well, but

this is a bit over the top.

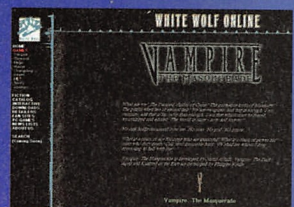
The full promise of the game has not yet been examined yet, however. The Storyteller mode of play, wherein multiplayer options involve the actual crafting of storylines and environments just as in a pen and paper session, wasn't active. When that comes off, though, it will probably excuse any other faults in the game as well as really being revolutionary.

Once again, in the words of the prophet, don't believe the hype. Even though I was becoming quite intrigued in Christof's story, Vampire is not yet the mature, sophisticated and groundbreaking RPG it has promised to be. While the pen and paper roleplayer in me might be disappointed, the gamer in me is certainly looking forward to the next lot of code.

Christian Read

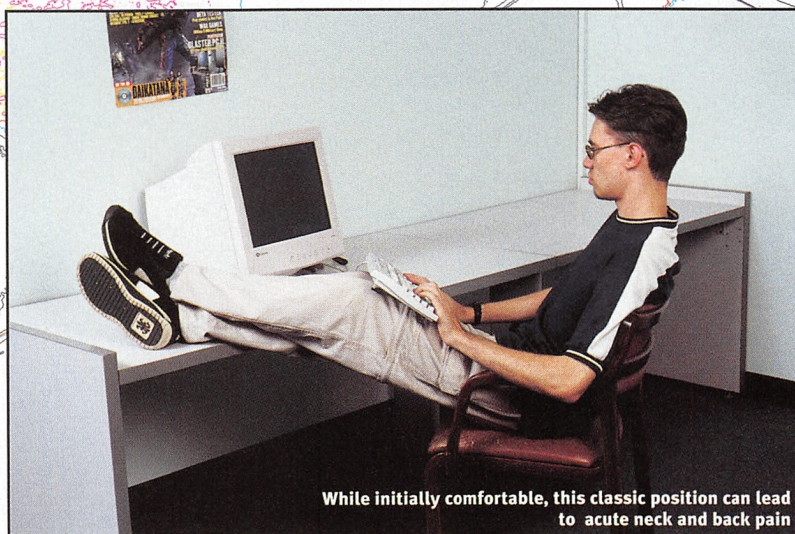
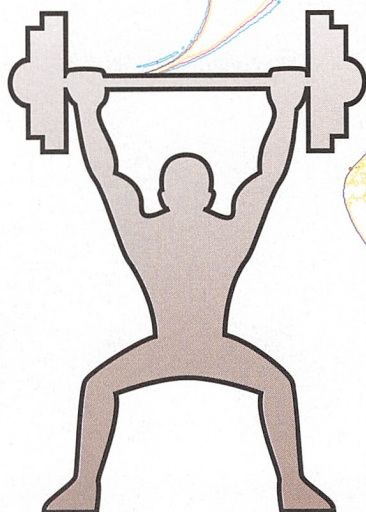
IT'S THE WOOL-UF!

Curious to discover more on the world of the Vampire The Masquerade? Well, the best place to start is with www.white-wolf.com. The guys who started it all have one of the best sites you'll visit. Lots of additional info can be found here as well as lots of links to fan sites.

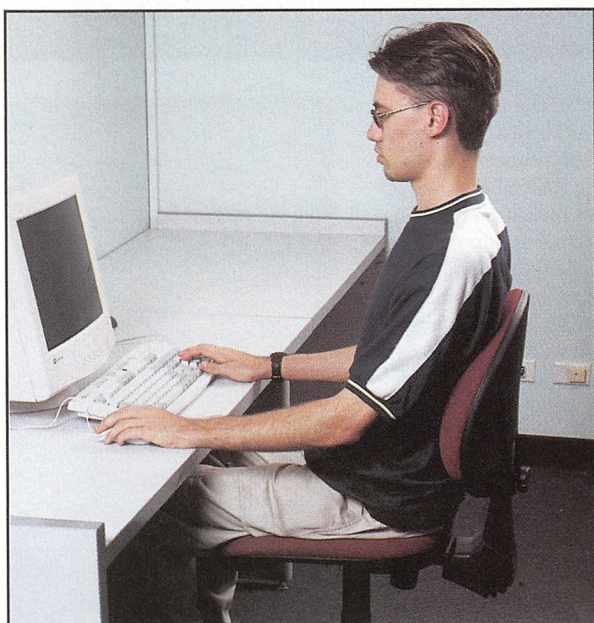


GAMING FITNESS

After spending a day deathmatching with the best of them, is your back inexplicably sore? Do you swear you can feel the onset of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome in your wrist? You're too young to be afflicted with arthritis, so what's causing these unbearable paroxysms of pain? Chances are, it's your chair and table that are to blame, as well as countless hours spent in front of your PC without respite. **Brett Robinson, MD**, brings you a guide to achieving a state of physical wellbeing, without the need to enroll in the PC gaming equivalent of the Methadone Program.



While initially comfortable, this classic position can lead to acute neck and back pain



Posture:

Your grandmother is right when she tells you that sitting up straight is good for you. Correct posture is essential to maintaining an acceptable degree of spinal curvature. Improper posture is prevalent in the extreme amongst avid gamers and those engaged in desk bound employment. Remaining in a seated position for extended periods of time is physically exhausting, and promotes the adoption of more relaxed, but ergonomically unstable positions. While many may view back pain as a mildly annoying side effect of their lifestyle, spinal problems can lead to further complications in the medium and longterm.

The spinal cord serves as the main conduit through which neural impulses pass from the brain to the limbs and vital organs. Because it serves as the fulcrum between the upper body and the legs, the

lower back is particularly susceptible to injury. However minor, damage to the spine and the spinal cord itself can lead to further complications. At its most basic level, this can induce minor muscular pain. Severe or longterm damage can have much more disturbing consequences.

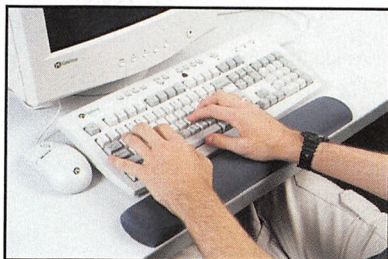
Compression of the spinal discs can lead to restricted blood flow to associated organs and limbs. One of the first symptoms of reduced blood flow is numbness, or a pins-and-needles sensation in the affected area. This occurs most commonly in the thighs and legs and is one of the earliest warning signs that something may be amiss. Perhaps even more worrying are the side effects associated with damage to the spinal cord itself. Disruption of neural impulses can create a multitude of problems, many of them permanent. These can include a reduced ability to move certain limbs, and



acute numbness in affected areas. Restricted blood flow and disruption of neural impulses have also been known to cause erectile dysfunction in males, which should be incentive enough for readers concerned about their future ability to perform in the bedroom to make necessary changes to their postures whilst using PCs.

Furniture:

Desk: Your desk should be large enough to fit both your monitor and keyboard on it, without either item infringing upon the space occupied by the other. That said, the monitor should remain at least 40cm from you when you use the keyboard. The surface of the desk should be set at a comfortable height that enables you to use the keyboard, mouse and any peripherals with relative ease. A desk set at an incorrect height in relation to the chair's height will induce pain in the forearms and wrists after particularly rigorous bouts of typing or gaming. It should be noted that complaints of wrist pain will often provoke lascivious and derogatory remarks from eerily suspicious friends and co-workers! Wherever possible, items used frequently should be arranged in an arc around you, preferably within easy reach. When frequently using



the keyboard or mouse, use of a wrist rest similar to the model manufactured by 3M (see above) is recommended.

Chair: Your choice of seating has far more bearing on your physical health than any other piece of game room equipment. Cushy lounge chairs, rigid plastic foldaway chairs and beanbags are a definite no-no. In recent years, office furniture manufacturers have come to recognise the importance of ergonomics. As such, many have tailored their chair designs to reflect the requirements of concerned employers and home office workers. These chairs, while invariably more costly, are essential for those who use PCs regularly. Most are height adjustable, and feature adjustable backs that provide excellent support for the lumbar region of the lower back. Contrary to popular belief, the absence of armrests on chairs often proves beneficial to the health of the user. When armrests are

present, many people have a tendency to inadvertently support themselves on one armrest. This leaning to one side causes an unnatural curvature of the spine, leading to widespread problems.

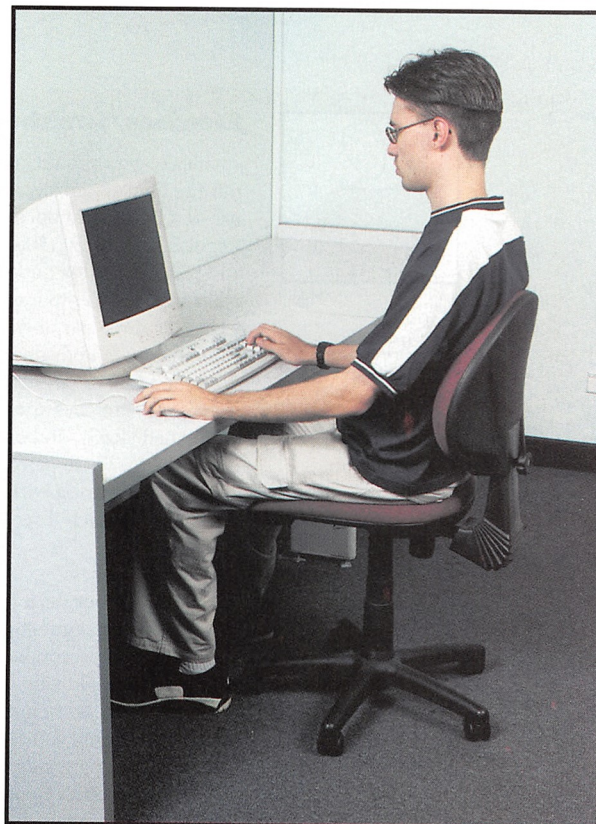
One company which specialises in the production of ergonomic office furniture is Gregory. Having owned a Gregory chair for the past 9 months, I cannot recommend them highly enough. The \$500 asking price is admittedly steep, but well worth it when you consider the price of chiropractic treatment and physiotherapy. Unfortunately, good quality office chairs may prove too costly for some. In these cases, a comfortable, rigid-backed chair may suffice. In the absence of proper lumbar support, a padded support (available from a wide variety of office furniture stockists) should be fitted to the back of the chair.

Heavy Lifting:

Until a sub-rokg monitor is perfected, heavy lifting will always be an unwelcome (and hazardous) part of PC gaming particularly when it comes to LAN parties and the like. To many, the obvious way to pick up a heavy object is to simply bend over and hoist it skyward. This is undoubtedly the simplest means by which you can completely destroy your back. Statistics prove it, with an overwhelming number of workplace injuries attributed to heavy lifting. The correct way to lift hefty objects is to assume a crouching stance with your feet planted firmly at shoulder width. With your back almost completely vertical, lift the object using your legs for leverage. Move into an upright stance, making sure you have a firm grip on your cargo, then carry it to whatever destination you desire. Placing the object back down simply requires you



Hunching over causes muscle fatigue in the neck, shoulders and back



The optimum position for longterm PC use

“ERGONOMIC CHAIRS, WHILE INVARIABLY MORE COSTLY, ARE ESSENTIAL FOR THOSE WHO USE PCs REGULARLY”



An instant ticket to long term spinal damage



The correct way to lift heavy objects

to perform the above procedure in reverse.

Putting it all together:

When seated, your chair and desk should stand at such heights as to allow your forearms to remain parallel with the floor when your hands rest on the keyboard or desk surface. The backrest of your chair should be adjusted so it provides the optimum lumbar support, and the angle of the backrest should keep you in an almost completely upright position. Finally, your knees should be bent at an approximate 90 degree angle (so that your thighs are parallel to the floor) and your feet should rest flat on the floor.

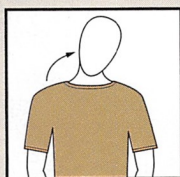
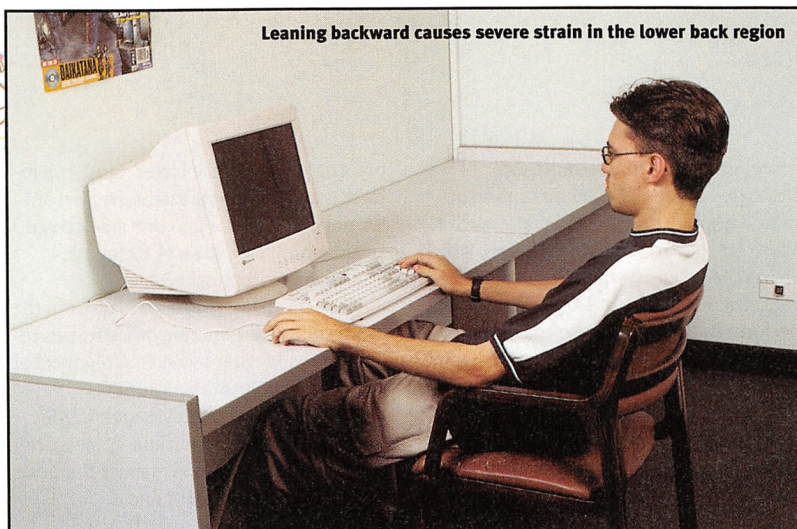


Fig.1

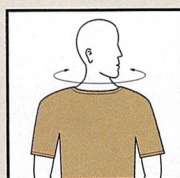


Fig.2

Exercises/Stretches:

Ideally, you should take a 5-10 minute break from any activity involving use of a PC at least once every hour. Regular stretching relaxes tired muscles and reduces the likelihood of strains and other injuries. Try to incorporate a short walk outside to stretch your legs and get some fresh air, and some time to grab a drink or a bite to eat, into these stretch breaks. All stretches should be performed slowly, and only as far as is comfortable. Try to perform different stretch types during each break, and repeat each stretch three times.

Neck Stretches:

Fig 1. Tilt your neck to the left side until you feel a slight stretch on the right side. Hold for 3 seconds. Repeat this stretch to the right side.

Fig 2. Turn your chin towards your left shoulder until you feel a gentle stretch on the right side of your neck. Hold for 3 seconds. Repeat this stretch for the right side.

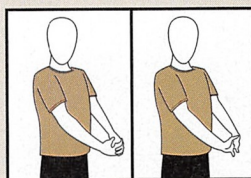


Fig.3

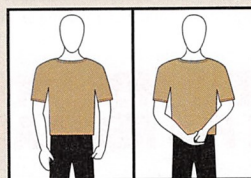


Fig.4

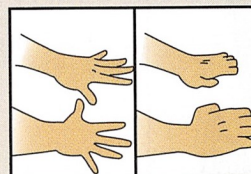


Fig.5

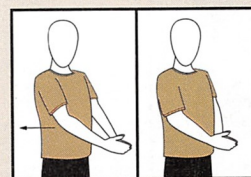


Fig.6

Arm Stretches:

Fig 3. Interlace your fingers then turn your palms forwards and stretch your elbows. Hold for 3 seconds and feel the gentle pull.

Fig 4. With your arms down in front of you, make a loose fist with your left hand. Now, keeping your elbow straight, bend the wrist and fingers of this hand with your right hand. Hold for 5 seconds and feel the gentle forearm pull. Relax and repeat with the other arm.

Hand Stretches:

Fig 5. Separate and straighten your fingers until the tension of the stretch is felt. Hold the stretch for 3 seconds. Relax then bend your fingers at the knuckles. Hold for 3 seconds.

Fig 6. Place your hands together at waist level with your fingers pointing forwards. Now, keeping your elbows level, pull your hands back towards your chest. Hold for 5 seconds and feel the

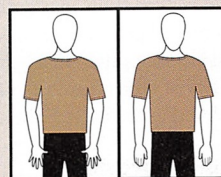


Fig.7

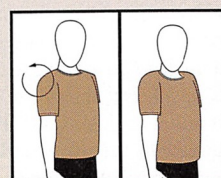


Fig.8

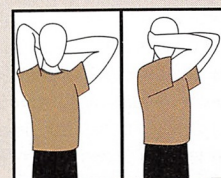


Fig.9

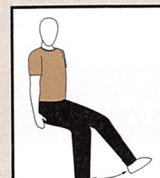


Fig.10



Fig.11

gentle forearm and wrist stretch.

Fig 7. Allow your hands to relax by your side. Straighten your fingers then spread them as wide apart as possible. Keeping your fingers straight (do not make a fist), squeeze them together as hard as you can.

Shoulder Stretches:

Fig 8. Roll your shoulders; raise them, pull them back, then lower them and relax. Repeat this in the opposite direction.

Fig 9. Grasp both hands behind your neck and press your elbows back. Now bring your elbows together in front. Relax and bring arms to your side.

Ankle Stretches:

Fig 10. Hold one foot off the floor with your leg straight. Flex your ankle (point toes up) and extend your ankle (point toes towards the floor). Repeat with the other leg.

Back Stretches:

Fig 11. Stand up straight with your feet slightly apart. Place your hands in the hollow of your back. Focus on a point straight ahead and keep looking forwards. Bend backwards without bending your knees, then straighten up. Do not hold the backwards bent position.

Eyes:

To reduce eye strain, take short rests and look into the middle distance (more than 6 metres) regularly.

Check out www.paratec.com and download the demo of Stretch Break: a handy little program which pops up a window every hour that reminds you to get up and take a break from gaming or typing. Exercise diagrams and tips are also included.



**THE RUSSIAN
BEAR IS STIRRING.**

**EASTERN EUROPE
JUST WENT CODE RED.**

STRAP INTO AN APACHE.

YOU'RE THE POINT MAN FOR WWII.

Russian Nationalism is back with a vengeance. Eastern Europe? Nothing less than the flashpoint for WWII. Russian forces amassed on one side. NATO on the other. You? You're about to deploy the most devastating weapon in the inventory of war: the helicopter gunship. You're locked and loaded with a battalion of the most fearsome choppers known to man; The AH-64D Apache, Westland Apache, Eurocopter Tiger and Mil-28 Havoc. All at your command. All ready for war. A total of 85 Realistic Weapon Types and 114 Different Vehicle Types await your strategic command. Finesse, raw power, stealth and speed meet in a high-wire balancing act of exacting proportions. So fly low. And strike deep.

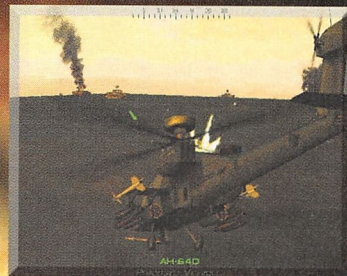
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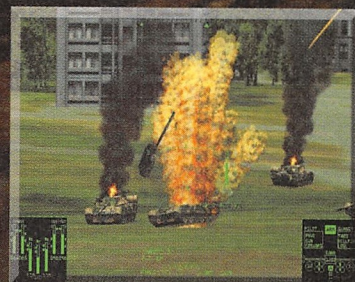
Jump into a state-of-the-art warbird and hit the ground gunning in a furnace of incendiary, cutting-edge action.



Rolling terrain for intense low altitude action: take cover behind trees, hills and ridges.



Mobilize in two hard-hitting modes: Instant-Action Target-Rich onslaught or Active World Campaign System overrun with military ground units.



Will connect with upcoming "Tank Platoon!" in the multi-player Airland Combat System.



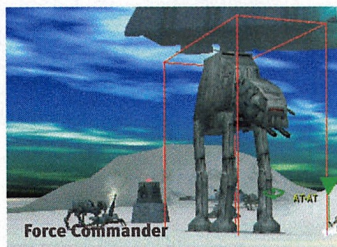
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REVIEW CONTENTS

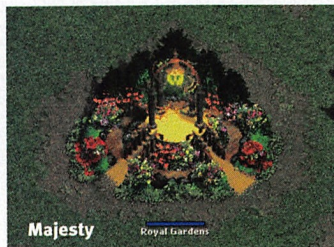
Another fine month in PC games...



Thief II



Force Commander



Majesty



Starlancer

THE PCPP CREW AND THEIR KLEPTO CONFESSIONS



Dan Ziffer

What I'm playing:

Soldier of Fortune, Motocross Madness, Shadow Watch.

Have I ever stolen anything?

Yes, but I've never framed anyone for murder. Yet.



David Wildgoose

What I'm playing:

Planescape, The Sims, Chrono Trigger

Have I ever stolen anything?

Hearts, kisses and glances - but mostly jokes.



Brett Robinson

What I'm playing:

Planescape Torment, The Sims, Gran Turismo 2

Have I ever stolen anything?

Who, me? *eyes darting suspiciously*



Christian Read

What I'm playing:

Asheron's Call

Have I ever stolen anything?

No.



Edward Fox

What I'm playing:

Nascar 3, GP500, Superbikes 2000

Have I ever stolen anything?

I'll plead the Fifth!



Timothy C. Best

What I'm playing:

Age of Wonders, Age of Empires II, Planescape

Have I ever stolen anything?

The hair of the Soul Glow guy, from Coming to America, and that's only because it's pretty obvious.



Elton Cane

What I'm playing:

Tread Marks, Battlezone II, Unreal Tournament

Have I ever stolen anything?

I refuse to comment on the grounds that I may incriminate myself.



March Stepnik

What I'm playing:

Thief 2, Thief Gold, SWAT 3, Mogwai

Have I ever stolen anything?

Aye.



Malcolm Campbell

What I'm playing:

Super Metroid, Beetle Crazy Cup

Have I ever stolen anything?

Bottle caps, silver buttons and other shiny objects.



John Dewhurst

What I'm playing:

Planescape, Battlezone 2

Have I ever stolen anything?

Only justice from heaven.



Maj. Des McNicholas

What I'm playing:

Panzer Elite, Gunship!, Janes FA-18.

Have I ever stolen anything?

Only a kiss! (Oh - and a Donald Duck Stencil in Grade 4)



Hugh Norton-Smith

What I'm playing:

Messiah, Soldier of Fortune, Quake3

Have I ever stolen anything?

No comment. My mother is an avid reader.



Agata Budinska

What I'm playing:

The Sims, Monkey Island's 1, 2 & 3, Might & Magic VI

Have I ever stolen anything?

A salt grinder... I take my dining very seriously.



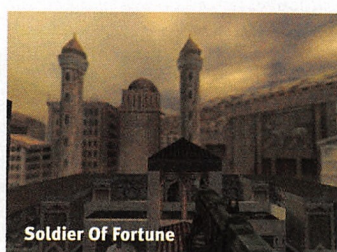
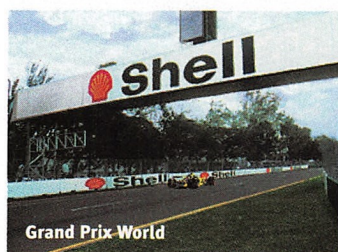
Garrett

What I'm playing:

Murder in the dark.

Have I ever stolen anything?

Oh please...



ISSUE 49 REVIEWS

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Whaddya mean it's got robots in it?

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Has LucasArts lost the plot?

62 Majesty

Little blokes that don't listen very well.

64 StarLancer

We can't get past the Wing Commander influence.

68 Shadow Watch

From the makers of Rogue Spear comes...

69 Grand Prix World

Grand Prix management, PC style.

70 Soldier Of Fortune

Not for the squeamish.

74 Theocracy

Little blokes do South America.

75 Tiger Woods 2000

Major Des meets Tiger Woods.

76 Beetle Crazy Cup

Herbie the love bug, with thrills and spills.

78 Star Trek: Armada

Can Patrick Stewart save this 3D RTS?

80 Superbikes 2000

Our Edward reckons this one nearly beats GP500.

81 Might & Magic VIII

No Disco Knights in this one, sadly.

THE PCPP REVIEW SYSTEM

NEED: The bare minimum system requirements to get the game up and running at a playable speed. Don't even think about the game unless you have this system.

WANT: The ideal system requirements for the game. You can still play it well without this setup, but this will allow you to see the game as it was meant to be.

FOR: The major reasons why you'll like the reviewed game.
AGAINST: The major reasons why you won't. Read both and decide which seems the most appropriate and important to you.

95+ **PLATINUM AWARD**
A virtually flawless title, one that expands our gaming horizons while providing a supremely playable experience. The absolute best there is. Everyone will love this game.

94-90 **GOLD AWARD**
A classic. Either an unquestionable example of superiority within its genre or a groundbreaking title that will soon be setting trends.

89-80 A strong title that's hard to fault. Eminently playable and likely to remain on the hard drive for some time. But perhaps not the best in its field.

79-60 Competent and playable. A few gameplay flaws or unoriginality hold this game back from a higher rating. For fans of the genre.

59-40 Decidedly average. Probably either full of bugs or lacking some crucial features. But, most of all, probably boring.

39-0 A dog. Bad, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible. Avoid.



PC PowerPlay

All in-house previews, reviews & testing are done on Gateway computers

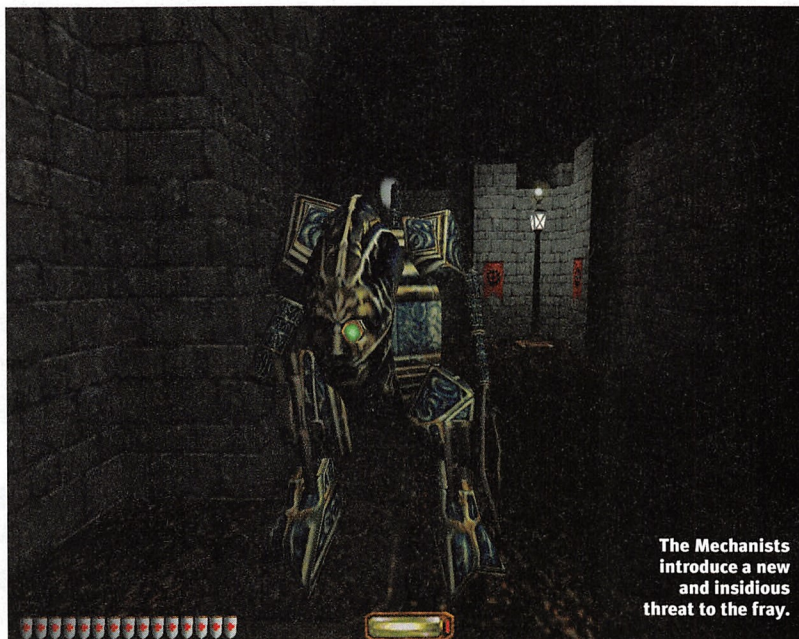
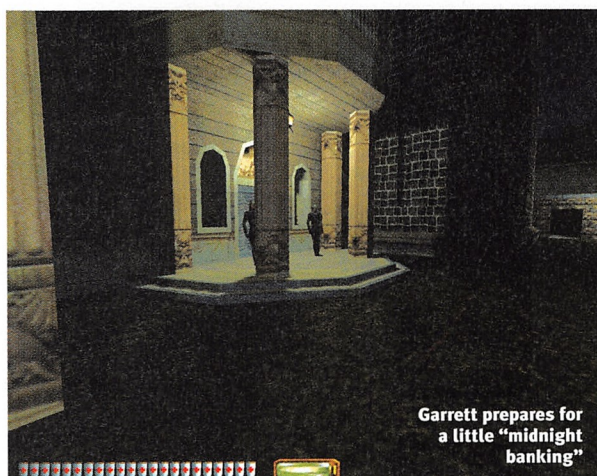
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THIEF II: THE METAL AGE

The most compelling argument for banning sunlight. Or at very least, becoming nocturnal.



"Tell them I'm through. Tell them it's over. Tell them Garrett is done."

"I will tell them this: nothing is changed. All is as it was written. The Trickster is dead. Beware the dawn of the Metal Age..."

While Garrett may have been warned of the Metal Age and its ominous beginning in the closing moments of *Thief: The Dark Project*, those that played this utterly captivating firstperson sneaker have been willing the first rays of the metallic dawn ever since. And the reasons why legions of gamers had been so thoroughly entranced by the game? Well... they're comparable in number to the array of tools at Master Thief Garrett's disposal. Put simply, *Thief* was (and still is, it must be said) an outstanding gaming experience.

Through the looking glass

Thief first caught the attention of many simply because of its development team. Responsible for essentials like the *Ultima Underworld*

series, *System Shock* and *Terra Nova*, Looking Glass Studios had already managed to fine-tune their skills at creating realtime firstperson action/adventure games. By the time the production of *Thief* had ramped up, the teams at Looking Glass had also proven themselves to be creators of finely detailed and immersive game worlds to boot. And *Thief* was being hyped as the next chapter in LG's exception tome of game design brilliance.

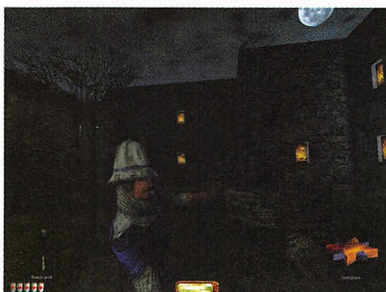
Once *Thief* rather cautiously crept onto our harddrives at the end of '98, it was near-impossible not to marvel at what Looking Glass had achieved. Not only had they attempted a new style of gameplay - that is, success through subversion and stealth as opposed to outright force and muscle tactics - more importantly, they managed to *make it work*. You played a thief: a mercenary of the night, making a living from the excesses of others.

It was a gamble on Looking Glass' behalf - would players respond well to being forced to skulk in the shadows,

to make as little noise as possible and attract the least amount of attention? It was a gamble that paid handsomely - *Thief's* core gameplay was as rewarding as it was challenging. After a few false starts (charging into Bafford's Manor - *Thief's* first mission - with the sword at the ready attempting to subdue any obstacles in your path the old-fashioned way, and as a result, naturally, carking it), slipping into the game's more subtle exploits was relatively painless and it opened up a whole new swag of gameplay possibilities. Discovering these was a major part of the *Thief's* charm.

Of course, *Thief* wasn't a random collection of larcenous pursuits. The missions were threaded together using an intricate and fascinating storyline (which shan't be divulged in too much detail here). As superb as the story was, its execution was a work of art. Through changing mission objectives, cynical asides, literature and character conversation - even the pacing of the plot development (at times, only snippets of information were given) -

The outdoor environments are much more pleasing to the eye.



Thief maintained an increasingly addictive tempo until the game's fitting conclusion. Like a good book, Thief was something you couldn't put down.

So with such an impressive prequel, the expectations of the next chapter have been exceedingly high.

A true masterpiece

As expected - Thief II: The Metal Age does it all over again. And while there have been numerous changes and additions to the Dark Engine (as used in The Dark Project), the core mechanics of Thief II remain identical to that of Thief's.

The first and most obvious change to the engine is the introduction of 16-

bit textures: world objects appear crisper and display more detail, which in turn increases the ease with which players immerse themselves within the gameworld. As well as sharper textures, there are now a much wider variety of player models and their polygon count has been (in most cases) doubled.

However, the most pleasing addition to The Metal Age is the new sky effects which replace the "empty black space with graphical anomalies" ceilings of the first. Given that most of Garrett's exploits take place under the moon, Thief II now features this beloved satellite to marvel at. Looking Glass has also modelled clouds, which,

THE METAL AGE

Thief II can be a little confusing to the uninitiated (or those that haven't played the first). Here's a brief rundown of the major players of Thief II.

Garrett: A master thief, and the character you play. Garrett was once a Keeper, and through events beyond his control managed to get both the Trickster and the Hammers offside. Garrett enters the Metal Age trying to lead as quiet a life as possible, if possible.

Gorman Truart: The City's sheriff. Wants Garrett dead, and badly. Is somehow connected with the Mechanists.

The Hammerites: A religious order of downright fanatics. Also known as the builders, the Hammers make a religion out of construction and order. Naturally opposed to the philosophies of Trickster and the Pagans. Suffered much damage during the events of Thief: The Dark Project.

The Keepers: A mysterious order that seeks to retain a balance between the forces of good and evil. They only get involved when a lack of intervention would see the scales of balance tipped too much towards one side.

The Mechanists: An offshoot of the Hammers, but where the Hammers used bricks and mortar, the Mechanists use metal and gears instead. Are said to be more fanatical than their kin. Make the Hammers look like impotent little puppy dogs.

Pagans: Those that worship the Trickster - the symbolic god of the wild and untamed aspect of nature. The Pagans spurn technology and yearn for the day when chaos rules again.

hard to forget. The Pagans have dispersed and the Hammers are still recovering from the conflict. You're back to your old ways, living off the rich and comfortable, doing what needs to be done to pay your rent. While the Keepers did warn you that the Metal Age may bring trouble, Thief II's opening mission is hardly threatening. You've been asked to do a favour for an old acquaintance of yours named Basso (who veteran thieves will remember saving from Cragcleft prison). He wants to break out his loved one - a servant to a wealthy clan of the City - from a massive estate patrolled heavily by

"...THE CORE MECHANICS OF THIEF II REMAIN IDENTICAL TO THIEF'S."

bit textures. Thief's graphics were never on par with what the best of the firstperson shooters had to offer, but they were beautiful in their own right and, given the context of the game (c'mon, how detailed does the dark really get?), entirely successful. Coupled with the complex AI routines and audio engine, Thief's world was a highly immersive one.

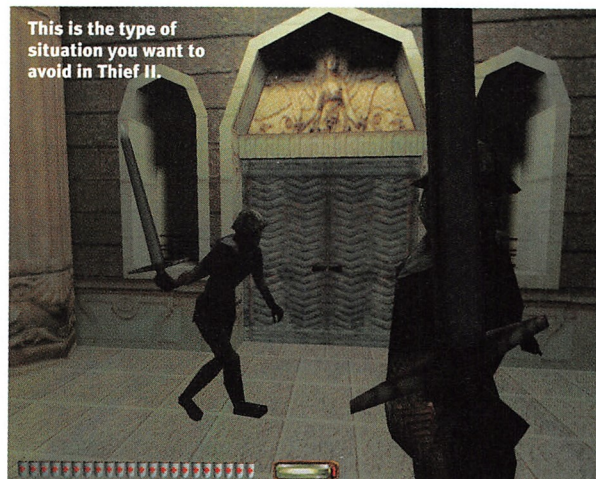
The sequel's visual appeal is that

if you stand and observe, gently pass by overhead. Combined with fog, rain and snow effects, the atmosphere in Thief II mounts even before you've taken your first step towards your mission objective.

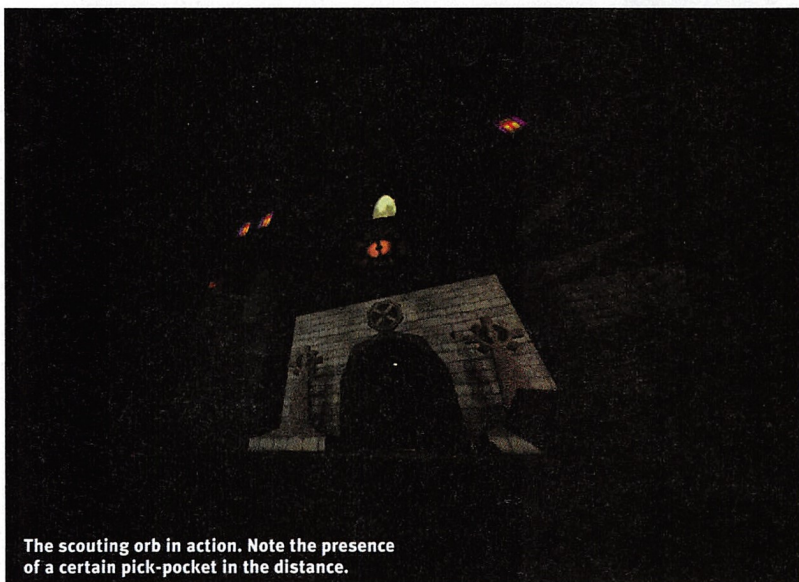
Shady pursuits

You reprise your role as Garrett, with the events of the previous adventure a memory you're trying

This is the type of situation you want to avoid in Thief II.



THIEF II: THE METAL AGE

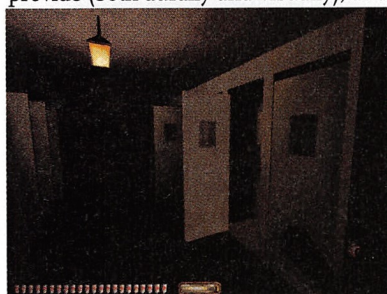


The scouting orb in action. Note the presence of a certain pick-pocket in the distance.



► guards. So you're tasked with scouting ahead and making sure that the path to her locked quarters is clear of any threats.

Making your way through the first mission (and others) is now much easier - the map clearly displays where you are and areas you've already been, and allows you to type notes onto the parchment itself. The mission is straightforward enough - you wander around, knockout any hapless guards and find paths around those guards who can't easily be taken care of. Basso takes care of the rest. It is an excellent tutorial mission and introduction to Thief's unique gameplay, in part thanks to the suggestions Garrett and the game provide (both aurally and visually), and



certainly more interesting than the original's tutorial.

The next couple of missions are as equally gentle as the first, serving as the perfect backdrop for players to ease themselves into a new story and a more detailed world. They document Garrett's continued quest to find the money to pay the rent (whoever said being a master thief was glorious? A playboy Garrett is not), with only basic hints as to the imposing story lurking around every corner.

As is true of all missions, the most thorough players here will be rewarded with a greater sense of the converging paths of the City's various inhabitants (not forgetting you, of course). In the warehouses of the second mission, for example, there are plenty of notices and hidden parchments that work much like pieces of a puzzle: the more you find and piece together, the greater sense of the 'bigger picture' you get. Those pieces not discovered within the game are divulged in the game's stunning cutscenes. Using a unique blend of motion capture and beautifully painted backdrops, Thief II's cutscenes display impressive production qualities, and

NEW GADGETS

There have been some enhancements since *The Dark Project*, and Garrett has access to far more effective tools of the trade.

Mechanical Eye: Garrett can now "zoom" in to objects in the distance. Helps Garrett discern better what may be lurking in the shadows.

Flares: Light one of these up and Garrett no longer has to be blind as a bat. Helps to light the way to secret items or passageways.

Slow Fall potion: When Garrett has to make a leap from the rafters, this potion not only protects you from taking damage but reduces the amount of noise you make during the jump.

Vine arrow: Firing this arrow at a vertical surface causes the head to explode and cover the wall with a thick network of vines. As a result, such vertical surfaces can now be climbed.

Invisibility potion: Finally. Drink this and you'll be able to walk right under the noses of guards and other unsavouries. Don't get too cocky though, others can still hear your footsteps and will react accordingly.

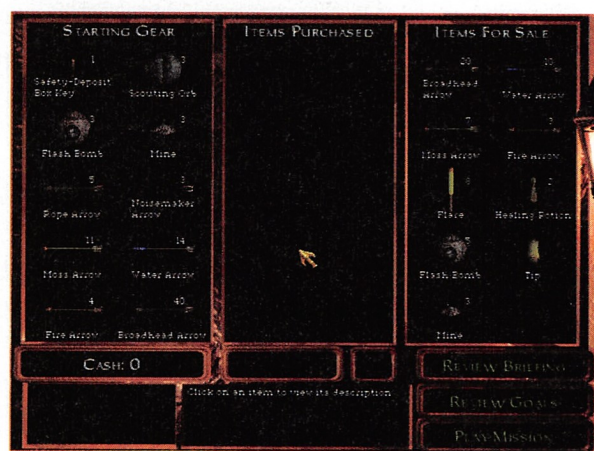
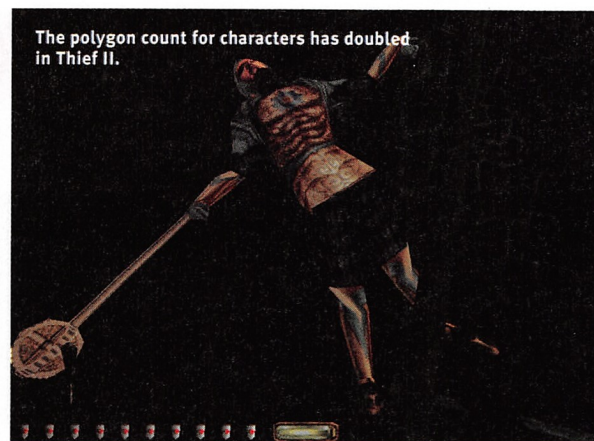
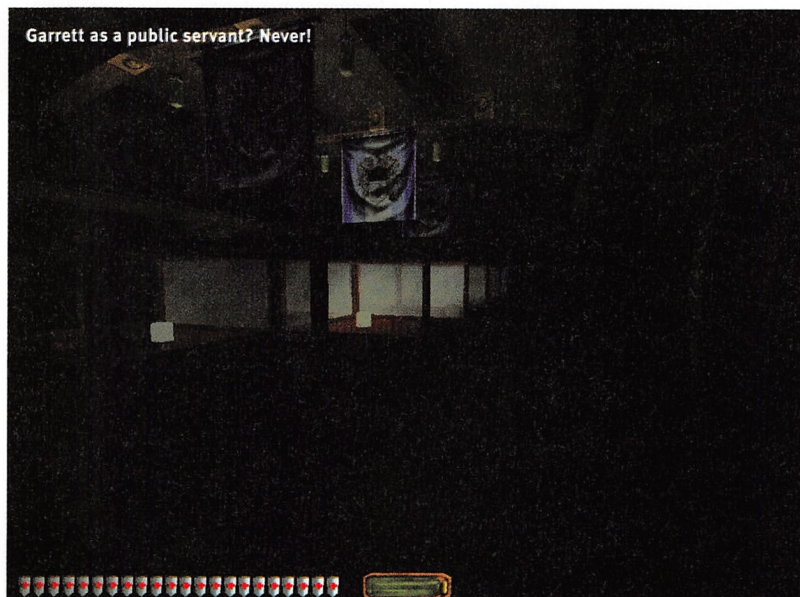
Scouting Orb: Perhaps the most useful tool in Garrett's arsenal. Simply throw this orb down a corridor and use it to gain information (however inexplicably) of what's around the corner. It's used to scout ahead and better plan your method of approach. Once disengaged, the orb can be picked up for later use.

have been created to suit the tone of the game perfectly.

Soon after the warehouse, the story picks up pace. You discover that you're wanted dead and that the ghosts of your past aren't that prepared to let you go your own way. So in the pursuit of survival, not fame and glory, you become - with much reluctance - involved in the ensuing mess.

The Watch

Although virtually all aspects are Thief II have been given impeccable treatment, it is the mission design that is its ultimate strength. All aspects of the missions have been lovingly crafted. Thief may have displayed some innovative design features and immersive gameplay environments, but Thief II takes it to another level. Firstly, the levels are *much* bigger - so much so that without a ninja computer, you're going to experience slowdown in parts. Secondly, this space has been better utilised. LG have crafted fully functional and appropriate sections of the City, ranging from sprawling mansions to near impenetrable strongholds, public taverns to the impressive City Watch

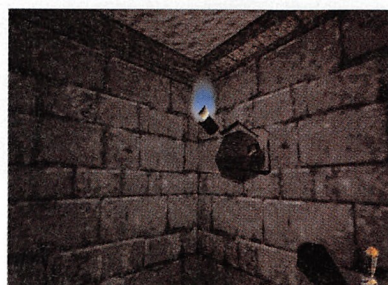


house.

These areas have also been further populated with characters and scripted conversations. As you sneak around the missions of Thief II, you'll regularly come across groups of people engaged in conversation. Not only is precious story and mission-critical information revealed here, it can be plain funny to listen to. Providing light comic relief, LG has also used these to improve continuity and thus T2's immersive qualities - conversations often relate to events portrayed in previous missions.

To best sum up the stronger design of Thief II, during Thief it was not inappropriate to feel as though certain levels were merely spaces between two objectives and created for purpose of gameplay. Whereas in Thief 2, the sense of creeping through a living and breathing world - one that exists with or without your presence - is much stronger. This is further supported by the many entrances to and from areas within the levels - as is typical in functional building design, there's always going to be a back door and a side door to make your way through. And in the Thief II, there are plenty of alternative paths for the player to discover.

The mission objectives themselves are equally impressive, having players engage in a wider variety of tasks than in the first. Generally, mission design is such that players are forced to sneak more and blackjack guards less. An oft-used tactic of the first was to blackjack the level's entire population before commencement of the level objectives - allowing players to pursue the mission objectives with little to no interference. Since a major part of Thief's charm was the tension created by Garrett's vulnerability, LG worked at reducing the instances in Thief 2



where this tactic can be successfully employed.

LG have also nailed the art of scripted objective changes. Featured in the first, these occur far more frequently in the sequel. Their effects are obvious: with expectations up-ended, players are forced to keep their wits about them, pay close attention to their surrounds and adapt accordingly.

No backstory

Thief II is not without its weaknesses, however. Although on the whole the AI is much better behaved, there are still times moments when the behaviour of a guard will have you (unintentionally) in stitches, negating some of the leaps and bounds LG have made in immersing the player within their world.

And LG haven't been very forgiving of those that haven't played the first. Thief II's story segues too well from the prequel. Players new to the series

may feel lost and confused as The Metal Age often refers to The Dark Project in places, and the information given here is quite often a meagre morsel. A nice little introduction would have been more than welcome. Still, persistent players can, over the course of the first act of Thief II, piece together much of the backstory.

Game of the year?

Thief II: The Metal Age is an exceptional piece of work. Fans of the first should dive into this one as soon as possible - Looking Glass has not only repeated its success here, but built upon it. Those keen to experience the Thief phenomenon for the first time won't be disappointed with the sequel, though might do better to pick up Thief Gold first.

As for game of the year - I wouldn't normally start placing bets in the middle of the year, but...

March Stepnik

extra

<http://www.prk.com/TheLaserEyeSurgerySite>
If only Garrett had access to this kind of eye surgery technology. Then again, the mechanical eye with zoom capabilities is much cooler.



● Genre: First Person Sneaker ● Players: 1
● Developer: Looking Glass ● Publisher: Eidos Interactive ● Distributor: Ozisoft
● Price: \$79.95 ● Available: NOW ● Rating: M
● Need: P266, 48MB RAM, 490MB HDD, sound card, 3D video card (D3D) ● Want: PIII or equiv, 128MB RAM, 870MB HDD, 3D sound card ● URL: <http://www.lglass.com>

FOR: Exceptional level design and game environments that drip with atmosphere. Drifting clouds!
AGAINST: Can only really be played at night time and lack of an easily understood backstory for newbies.

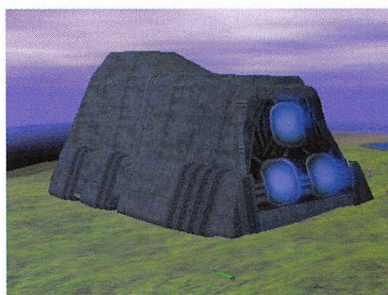
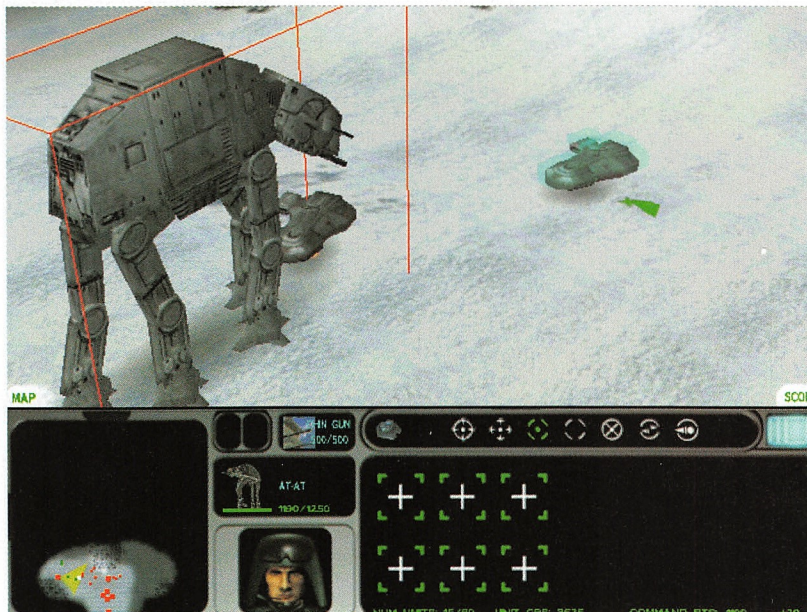
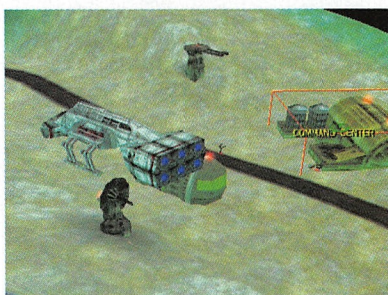
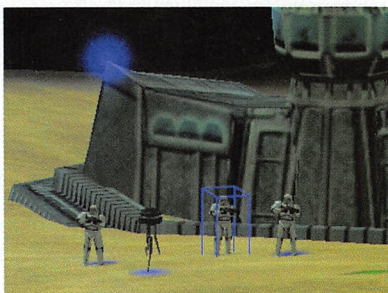
95

STAR WARS: FORCE COMMANDER

Brett suspects that some LucasArts staff may have switched to the Dark Side.

tips

From the outset of each mission, place at least one defensive turret in close proximity to your base. This will temporarily stave off attacks from enemy scouts. As a vehicle's damage levels approach critical, order any troops within it to disembark. If the unit is destroyed, any troops inside will be instantly killed. Don't waste valuable CP's on unit upgrades in the early stages of the game. The upgrades are expensive, and do little to enhance the units' attributes.



Imperial tents come complete with thrusters

As any true Jedi will attest, a disturbance in The Force is cause for concern. This time around, the disturbance has emanated from a wholly unexpected source; LucasArts. Once a company hailed for its groundbreaking titles like Tie Fighter, Dark Forces 2 and Grim Fandango, LucasArts is in very real danger of alienating its loyal fan base with this latest release in its seemingly endless



The battle on Hoth was adjourned as both sides sipped hot cocoa

Star Wars line of games.

No resource management?

Being a 3D RTS, one could reasonably expect the game's camera system to be intuitive and effective. Surprisingly, the opposite is true, with the camera controls proving unwieldy and unwaveringly inaccurate. Equally disappointing is Force Commander's 3D terrain, which is only traversible by a minority of units. This will inevitably lead many to question the wisdom of utilising a 3D engine in the first place.

In many respects, Force Commander stays true to its cinema roots. Within Force Commander, there is no resource management per se. Instead, a logical system of unit and structure acquisition has been implemented. At the outset of each mission, the player is awarded a small number of Command Points. Command Points represent the overall success and respect garnered by the player in the execution of their duties, as well as their standing in the eyes of superior officers. In short, they're the



Imperial forces jealously guarded the best picnic spots

player's buying leverage within the military chain of command. It stands to reason that players who manage to expediently accomplish their goals with minimal loss of life or equipment are awarded far more Command Points than players who achieve their goals in a less efficient manner.

This initial outlay of Command Points serves as a means for the player to procure basic defensive structures, and requisition a smattering of troops and low level vehicles. However, units and buildings are not constructed on the planet itself. Instead, they are taken from an available stockpile on the Command and Control craft in orbit above the planet, and transferred to the player via numerous cargo vehicles. Over the course of each mission, additional Command Points are acquired through the successful accomplishment of specified Primary goals. Bonus Command Points are also awarded for the capture of valuable enemy infrastructure, as well as the fulfillment of Secondary and Tertiary objectives.



Only Comalco profited from the ongoing conflict



The Rebel road-side diner boasted a small clientele



Sony's second AIBO prototype received critical acclaim

Dominant rebels

Unfortunately, the Command Point system has numerous limitations that have proven beneficial in keeping the rabid fans happy, but are markedly detrimental to the gameplay dynamic. The initial outlay of Command Points

LucasArts have also succeeded in sacrificing one of the most important aspects of any RTS title; that of play balancing. In the movies, the Empire's Storm Troopers were notorious for their appalling lack of marksmanship skills, and one often wondered if they could ever manage to hit the broad side

"THE COMMAND POINT SYSTEM HAS NUMEROUS LIMITATIONS"

at the beginning of each mission is intolerably meagre. Consequently, the player is placed in an unfortunate predicament where they remain extremely vulnerable to being overrun by the rush tactics favoured by the AI. Until some of the more straightforward objectives are achieved, the player's base is often left wholly undefended, and the tiny force at their disposal is often rapidly decimated by the superior number of enemy units. Missions that end prematurely, often within the first 5 minutes, are an infuriating byproduct of this short-sighted system.

By attempting to placate the diehard Star Wars-obsessed, and retain a degree of synergy between Force Commander and the movies,

of a Sandcrawler. By comparison, the Rebel troops were veritable sharpshooters, often taking down multiple Storm Troopers in a matter of seconds. While this was all well and good in a movie series where the forces of good were destined to prevail over evil, the same phenomenon has absolutely no place within a game. It seems that LucasArts saw fit to imbue the Rebel grunts within Force Commander with the same statistically anomalous precision shooting abilities as their on-screen counterparts, while simultaneously ascribing a distinct incompetence to the Empire's troops. As large bands of Storm Troopers labour to destroy a lone Rebel Turret, 4 grenade-toting rebels are miraculously able to shred an AT-ST in a matter of seconds. ▶



TROUBLE FROM THE WORD 'GO'

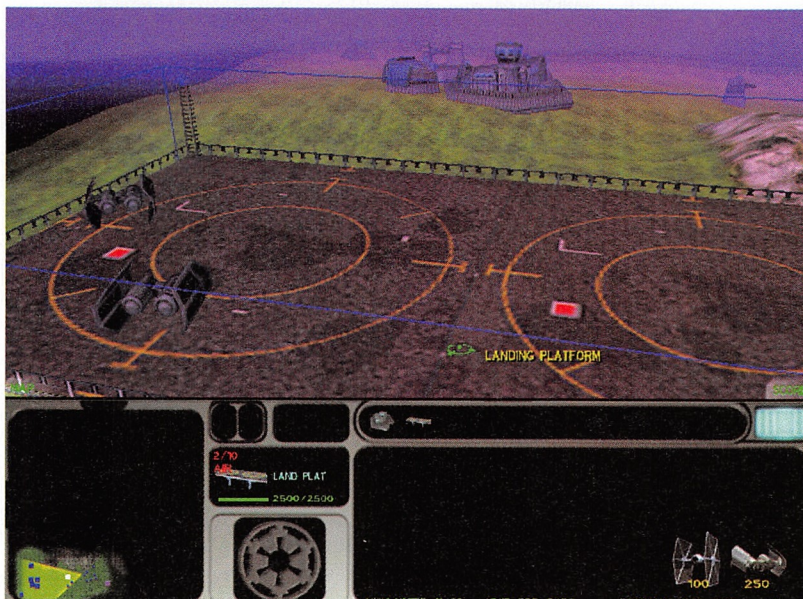
Following the untimely death of a commanding officer, the player is promoted to a rank befitting a combat veteran, and begins in earnest the Empire's campaign to bring the entire galaxy under its control. From the outset, impressions of Force Commander are less than positive. The game's visuals are disturbingly reminiscent of games produced several years ago: blocky, blurry and largely unspectacular. And bugs begin to rear their ugly heads within the first few minutes of play. Numerous pathfinding and AI problems make movement across vast tracts of land much more taxing than it should be, and the number of units is almost strictly limited to those featured in the original 3 movies.



TRANSFER TEDIUM

Additional limitations of the system serve to further hamper the player's progress. Each transport vehicle type is able to transfer more than one structure or unit to the planet's surface per sortie. This allows the player to simultaneously requisition several troops, assault vehicles and buildings. However, only one type of each transport vehicle is available to the player, and the player must wait for the vehicles to return to orbit before additional resources can be ordered. This, coupled with the glaring absence of a unit queuing system, makes forming a decent sized defensive or offensive force a tedious and time-consuming task.

STAR WARS: FORCE COMMANDER



Vader's balcony was rather expansive

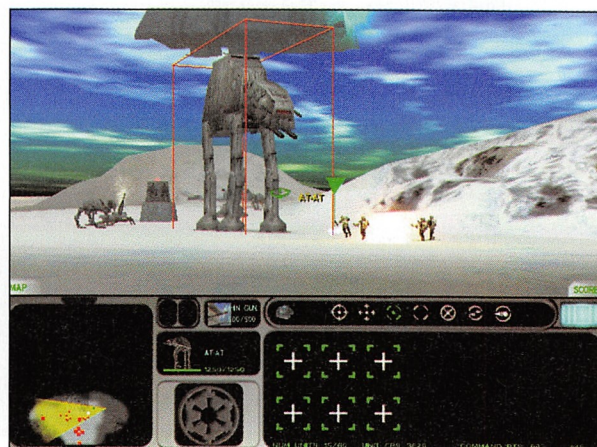
Stuck with guard duty

Admittedly, Force Commander introduces some interesting new features to a languishing and somewhat stagnant genre. Structures and vehicles controlled by the player can be manned by multiple troops. These troops then serve as a last line of defence against enemy assaults and prevent enemy soldiers from simply capturing valuable buildings. Unfortunately, this minor innovation is marred by the simple fact that combat vehicles and structures manned internally by troops accrue no additional benefits from their boosted manpower. This reduces combat vehicles to little more than glorified

Armoured Personnel Carriers.

In retaining a high degree of authenticity within Force Commander, LucasArts have succeeded in severely diminishing the game's fun factor. Doubtless, many Star Wars fanatics will vociferously contest a 58% rating. For these people, the very fact that it's a Star Wars title may add immeasurably to the game's appeal. But for those not easily swayed by marketing hyperbole, Star Wars: Force Commander is proof positive that poor quality games based on successful movie licenses are no longer assured of commercial success.

Brett Robinson



INVULNERABLE INFANTRY

Sadly, there are even more annoying gameplay deficiencies to contend with. A lack of adequate collision detection frequently sees units irreversibly stuck within terrain features and buildings. Perhaps even more infuriating is the fact that ground troops seem immune to attempts to crush them. Observing them escaping unscathed from the crushing feet of leviathan AT-AT's and the impressive bulk of APC's is frustrating at best.



The Empire's monopoly on cocaine caused a Rebel backlash

extra

www.starwars.com
A rather obvious choice, but this quality web site features an excellent reference section detailing every aspect of the Star Wars universe; from alien species, to combat spacecraft and famous battles. Well worth a look.



- Genre: RTS ● Players: 1-Multi
- Developer: LucasArts ● Publisher: LucasArts ● Distributor: Metro Games
- Price: \$TBA ● Available: NOW ● Rating: TBA
- Need: P266, 64MB RAM, 450MB HDD, 8MB 3D Videocard (D3D), 4xCD ● Want: PIII400, 128MB RAM, 600MB HDD, 12MB 3D Videocard, 20xCD
- URL: www.lucasarts.com/products/forcecommander/default2.htm

PCPP

FOR: A superbly cinematic intro, authentic sound effects and the fact that it's Star Wars.

AGAINST: A flawed unit acquisition system, abysmal camera control, non-existent play balancing, and dodgy AI.

58

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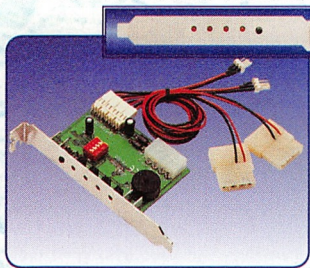
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The PCMCIA external cooling kit

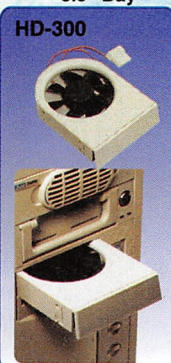


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P-02SII
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for Pentium & K6



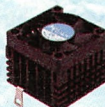
SF-600 (60 X 60 X 25mm)
SF-800 (80 X 80 X 25mm)
SF-801(3 wire) (80 X 80 X 25mm)
SF-900 (92 X 92 X 25mm)



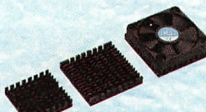
P-22SII (Dual Fans)
For SECCII & Pentium III



P-22A (Dual Fans)
For Pentium II & Athlon/K7



P-500
For Socket 7, Socket 370 300Mhz and up



CS-100
Chipset cooler for AGP CARDS, MAINBOARDS.



P-32SII (Three Fans)
For SECCII & Pentium III



P-05A (Three Fans)
For Pentium II & Athlon/K7



P-600 (6cm Fan)
For Socket 7, Socket 370 500Mhz and up



P-02C
For celeron



P-22C (Dual Fans)
For celeron



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CH-420
For AGP Card, Voodoo Card.

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tips

6382 Random (Advanced) 28 Days

Prang Bopo (5)

Gnome Level

Wizards Guild Level 3

Palace Level 3

PALACE REWARDS

ATTACK flag

1400

EXPLORE flag

0

SPELLS

OPTIONS



The screenshot shows a top-down view of a game environment. In the center, a large, orange, mechanical-looking creature (a Golem) is standing on a pile of rubble. To its left, a green, glowing, ethereal figure (a Spirit) is visible. The ground is a mix of green grass and brown dirt. In the background, there are some trees and a small building. The interface includes a minimap on the left, a unit list on the bottom left, and a status bar at the bottom.

6513 Random (Advanced) 31 Days

PALACE BUILDINGS

- Farmstead 2050 gold
- Guardhouse 213 gold**
- Inn 417 gold
- Library 570 gold
- Marketplace 2402 gold
- Weapons Guild 1330 gold

2371 BUILD

Storn the Loyal (5)

Not far as the Road the Elfrazor (4)

Richards Gold Level 3

SPELLS

OPTION



That's not to say that the AI is terrible. Rangers usually do exactly what they are supposed to, which is scout out as much as they can, and barbarians are fearsome, but too often you'll see something that makes you



The little window (bottom left) lets you track specified units or monitor a particular area.

scream with frustration at your stupid people. Your own heroes seem far too easily scared away by anything. It's quite amusing to see mighty wizards and doughty warriors fleeing in brown-trousered terror from wolves - not werewolves, not fearsome direwolves, but dogs.

Juggling economics

Significantly, the ingame ratio of taxation to costs of buildings and units

that create these heroes, you are often overwhelmed. And when even defensive spells are costing you at times well over one thousand gold, you'll learn quite quickly just how broke a kingdom can get.

The combat aspect of the game also leaves much to be desired. There are no real terrain modifiers for combat or movement or anything aside from where you can build. There is no elevation, which denies one of the RTS

"DOUGHTY WARRIORS FLEEING IN BROWN-TROUSERED TERROR"

seems unbalanced. Maximum taxation from marketplaces - the best source of revenue - is about 600 gold pieces; an average soldier hero will cost you about 400 gold. When you are suddenly deluged by enemy monsters, and have just had to fork out for the buildings

genre's staple strategic considerations. Best of all, flying units are subject to hand-to-hand combat from ground-based units.

The bright side

It's not all bad, though. Majesty's



Green toxic waste is an effective land clearer.

visual presentation is handsome, with nice character animation and sounds. However, it does not stack up to something like Age of Empires II or even the unique monstrosities of TA: Kingdoms. It's not the design that's the problem, after all the advanced structures, especially the temples to the gods, are quite handsome things to gaze on. The fact is, though, when you have nothing remotely original in the fantasy world, it's hard to do things new and exciting.

Majesty is a bold experiment in mixing genres and breathing life into RTS games, which is certainly a noble attempt. But instead of allowing further scope by freeing control, it does the exact opposite. The game needs, desperately, some fine tweaking. Maybe we should wait for the sequel.

Christian Read



extra

Ardania is standard Tolkienesque fantasy. Elves, Dwarves, Goblins, all of them got their start as genre mainstays in Lord Of The Rings. Now things are turning full circle, as the novel becomes a big Hollywood feature film. Have a look at www.lotr.org for the scoop on the film.



- Genre: RTS Sim Combo ● Players: 1-Multi
- Developer: Cyberlore ● Publisher: Microprose ● Distributor: Hasbro
- Price: TBA ● Available: NOW ● Rating: TBA
- Need: P166, 32MB RAM, 4xCD, 300MB HDD ● Want: PII 300, 128MB RAM, 400MB HDD
- URL: www.cyberlore.com

PCPP

FOR: Unique attempts at RTS interfacing. Nice building design.

AGAINST: Poor AI. Seemingly unbalanced money/production ratios. Uninspired world design.

79

STARLANCER



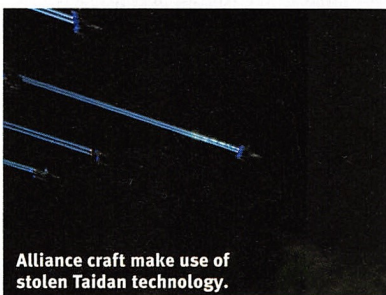
The brains behind the Wing Commander series, Chris and Erin Roberts, are not amateurs when it comes to the art of creating simulated space combat.

tips

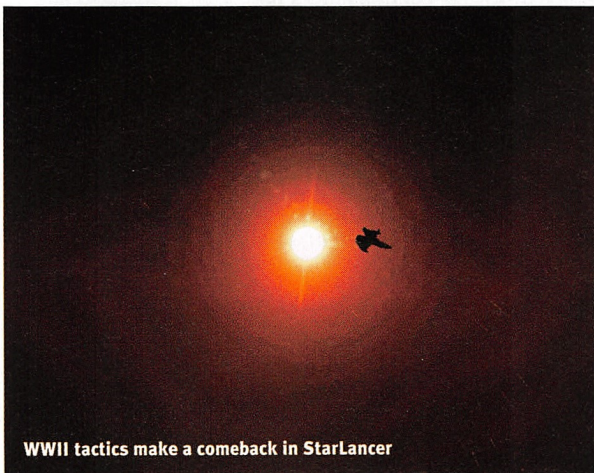
- Remember that thrust control plays a vital element in successful combat. Train up for as long as it takes in the simulator or you'll be a french-fry when it comes to the real deal.
- Keep close tabs on what the enemy is doing, as their tactics are often effective against the unwary opponent.
- When enemy torpedo bombers are attacking your convoy, concentrate your fire on the torpedoes that have been launched and worry about the bombers once the convoy is safe.
- When going up against a larger ship, the first things that should be destroyed are the shield generators, as no damage will be inflicted whilst they are operational.



Space is spacious.



Alliance craft make use of stolen Taidan technology.



WWII tactics make a comeback in StarLancer

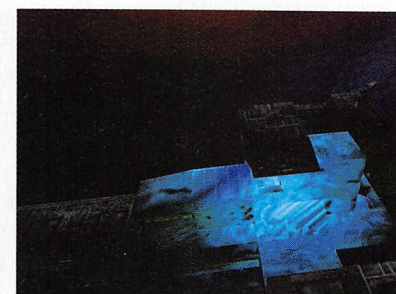
With a number of years at Origin spent evolving the space sim genre, the Roberts brothers have demonstrated they've got what it takes. Now at Digital Anvil, they've proven it once again. Containing all the elements that made Interplay's Freespace series so successful, and then some, Starlancer is space combat par excellence.

Immediately noticeable upon running Starlancer is the considerably smaller scale of the story compared to other games of its type. Most space combat simulators generally incorporate some form of unbelievable extraterrestrial species that, while required for the story, usually serves to ruin the immersion and quasi-realism levels of the game. But fortunately, in order to overcome this "silly looking alien" problem the Digital Anvil has opted to simply not include any. Thus Starlancer is based entirely in our very own solar system, bringing the story even closer to home by pitting humans against fellow humans.

Go West

Starlancer sees mankind in a very believable future state of affairs. The population of our solar system is so massive that it inhabits five out of the nine planets within it, and now once again, our inability to unite has served to fuel the fire of conflict.

While set to travel beyond our solar system for the first time ever, mankind has let internal affairs deteriorate. Taking advantage of the situation, a newly formed coalition of Eastern



nations has decided to make a grab for power. The ensuing attack came as a complete surprise to Alliance forces, and coupled with the stretched military power of their Western nations, the Coalition managed to take Earth and Mars in one almighty swoop, causing the deaths of millions of innocent civilians. The Alliance, now routed by the Coalition from populated space, is re-grouping its forces around Pluto, and from there, on the edge of the solar system, they will make a stand!

Players assume the role of a pilot in the 45th Alliance volunteer squadron. The 45th is a rag-tag bunch of misfits recruited when the exiled Alliance government, due to heavy casualties, started enlisting civilians with flight experience to help wage the war.

Watch TV

With the story driven system widely adopted when developing space combat sims, Digital Anvil has not reinvented the wheel, but rather they have fitted gold plated, sports rims to it (I'm impressed you can still manage to get the car references into every review - Ed). The story unfolds magnificently in a number of different ways, from detailed cutscenes depicting the current state of the war, to dealing with unplanned situations, which arise in almost every mission beyond the rank of Captain.

The players' primary source of information is the ITAC database. From here, information regarding any aspect of the current game state can be retrieved for reference. Archived news



reports, detailed squadron member status and an Alliance wide kill-board are just some of the features the ITAC sports. Players may also source information from the TV news display,



broadcast. Additionally, whilst not a necessity for the veteran Freespace or Wing Commander pilot, the training simulator is an invaluable tool for the

"STARLANCER REALLY STRUTS ITS STUFF WHEN IT COMES TO COMBAT"

which basically iterates the ITAC news reports in the form of a television

newbie. Complete with extensive lessons in flight control, system control



Intensity's latest ride brought in the crowds.

TAKE A TOUR OF THE SHIP

Opposed to the traditional, boring system of incorporating the player interface (menu, buttons + pretty backdrop - whoo hoo!), Starlancer offers a set of high quality rendered animation sequences which see the player navigate the personnel areas of the base ship. These areas include a simulator for training and practice, a personal locker for viewing medals and awards achieved during the course of a career, a TV news display, and the Intelligence and Tactical (ITAC) information database.



and weapon control, the simulator will have any squib rookie totting blasts with the best of 'em in no time at all! Mission continuity is well engineered. Fail to destroy an enemy vessel in an early mission, and it's likely the same ship will show up later on down the track.

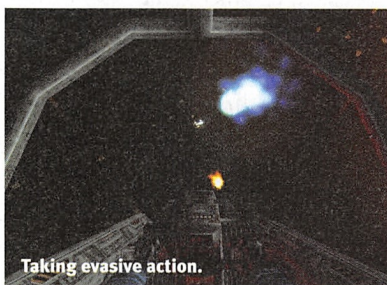
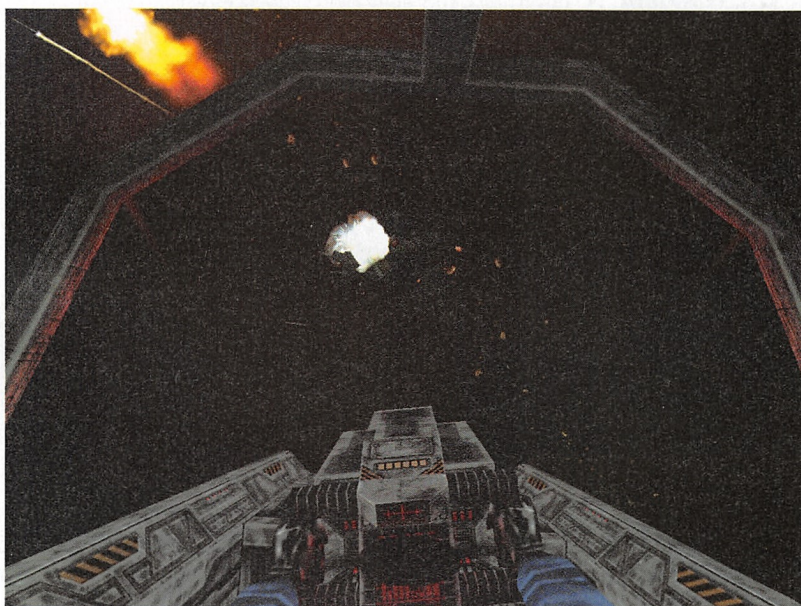
Operatic strutting

The interface and story line aside, Starlancer really struts its stuff when it comes to combat. When it comes to simulated space flight, the developer must rely mostly on guesswork in order to construct a flight dynamic, the physics that they feel represents something close to what it would actually be like. Keeping in mind that the final product has to remain playable, Digital Anvil has worked to give us what has got to be the closest thing we've seen yet! Ships no longer start and stop as if they were on tarmac, but rather float and drift, and this in turn causes thrust control mastery to play a vital role in almost every battle situation.

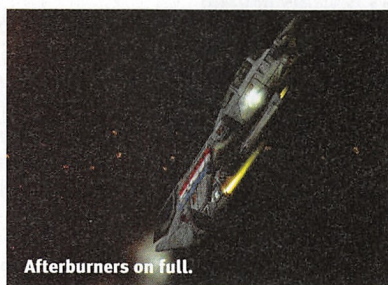
The visuals complement the rest of the game nicely. Stunning backdrops -



STARLANCER



Taking evasive action.



Afterburners on full.

► with a realistically rendered sun and its planets - set the scene for some of the most intense fights ever witnessed in the genre. All the spacecraft (complete with original semi-VR cockpit) are gorgeous to look at. There are about ten in total to choose from,

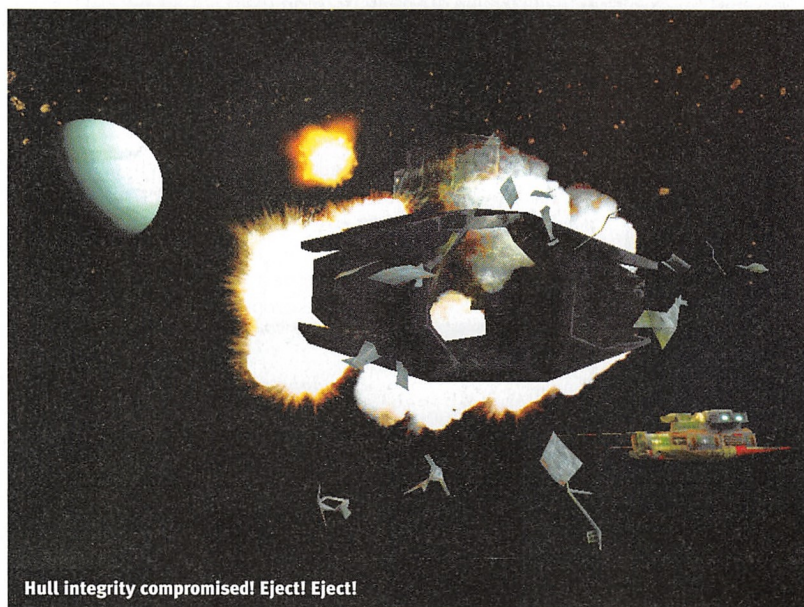
with the faster, more powerful ships only available once a certain rank is earned.

My only complaint is the relatively puny dimensions of all the capital ships, as anyone familiar with Freespace 2 will remember the mighty Shivan super-

vessels measured in at a hefty twelve kilometres. That aside, when watched from a fly-by camera, Starlancer is an opera of chaos, comparable only to the great end battles of Star Wars. Audio has - surprise, surprise - also been done remarkably well. When fired, all weapons produce a unique sound which seems to fit surprisingly well, and other ships can also be heard when within a certain range.

Tie all these elements into a ball and you've got a state of the art space combat simulator. Starlancer, like Freespace before it, has once again forced the standard in the genre to raise a couple of notches.

Edward Fox



Hull integrity compromised! Eject! Eject!

extra

www.wingcommander.com
This is where it all started!



● Genre: Space Combat ● Players: 1-16
● Developer: Digital Anvil ● Publisher: Microsoft ● Distributor: Microsoft
● Price: \$TBA ● Available: NOW ● Rating: MA +15
● Need: P200, 32MB RAM, 300MB HDD, 8xCD, 3D Videocard (D3D, Glide) ● Want: PIII300, 64MB RAM, 1.2GB HDD, 32xCD ● URL: www.microsoft.com/games/da/starlancer/

PCPP

FOR: A wonderfully complete package with amazing visuals and an immersive, believable story line.

AGAINST: Capital ships look too small, while the ship radar is hard to focus on in combat!

93

POSSESSION IS THE LAW

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SHADOW WATCH

Rainbow Six takes a trip to X-Com land. And if you think that sounds simplistic, well then so is the game...

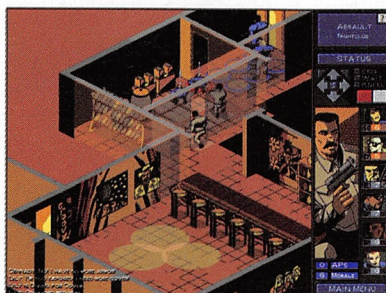


Red Storm Entertainment, creator of the critically-acclaimed Rainbow Six series of tactical firstperson shooters, is infiltrating new ground with its latest offering - Shadow Watch. Combining the all-but-forgotten style of turn-based combat with squad level strategy and team management skills, Shadow Watch attempts to bring the best of them together in a unique tactical RPG style game.

The first unescapable impression of the game is its retro comic book look, the sort that might easily play host to a masked super hero at any moment. In all its lo-res, bland colours and flat two-dimensional glory, this look works quite surprisingly well, in a clean, minimalist sort of way.

Russian space

In charge of an elite group of six military experts, the job at hand is to lead the team through either individual missions, similar to skirmishes, or a series of 16 randomly generated missions. The latter form a campaign, encapsulating such roles as defending, attacking, rescuing a hostage, placing surveillance bugs, and more. Set in the not-too-distant future, the missions tell a story of attempts to sabotage a multinational space station effort, and takes place over three city environments: Rio de Janeiro, Hong Kong, and Baikonur



and take place in a single building, usually no bigger than 6-8 rooms. To add to the sting, if you lose just one agent, you have to replay the mission.

With the successful completion of a mission the team of agents gains experience, enabling the choice of new skills for them, thus boosting their effectiveness. For example, Ian Archer, the leader, can confer a morale boost to other team members. "Bear" is the

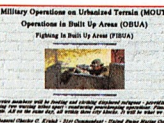
characters get extra action points if their adrenaline levels rise. For example, hearing a loud noise adds one action point, being shot at adds another. When a character's action points exceed his or her morale rating, the character's morale breaks and they will run away or charge recklessly into battle.

While any shortcomings in continuity of plot and limited selection of tactical controls are disappointing, the same can't be said for the system used in randomising plots. All up, over 160 possible campaigns may be generated, offering endless hours of new challenges. The developers also deserve credit for the unique approach to the overall look of the game. However, games such as Jagged Alliance 2 and X-COM have done a much better job executing this style of game in the past. Give us more detail and more options next time please.

Mike Wilcox

extra

www.geocities.com/Pentagon/6453/
Military Operations in Urbanised Terrain (MOUT). An excellent resource for those with an interest in MOUT and urban warfare tactics.



"IF YOU LOSE JUST ONE AGENT, YOU HAVE TO REPLAY THE MISSION"

(Russia's space facilities). Each of these missions requires the discovery and interrogation of a variety of 'contacts', and depending on the course of questioning, the remainder of the mission alters accordingly.

Unfortunately, that's about as interesting as it gets. Whatever story options unfold, the game is inevitably a series of uninspiring battles on small playing areas, which in some cases aren't even linked to each other. The missions themselves are fairly short

muscle of the team, kicking down doors and enemies. Maya Knight is a crack shot with her sniper rifle, and Gennady Roschinko's surveillance devices help the Shadow Watch team detect unseen enemies.

Morale break

The turn-based system sees agents with an allotment of 3 action points per turn, which allows them to move 3 spaces (6 if running) and/or fire their weapons. In an interesting twist,

- Genre: Tactical Combat ● Players: 1
- Developer: Red Storm ● Publisher: Red Storm ● Distributor: Jack of all Games
- Price: \$TBA ● Available: NOW ● Rating: M
- Need: P100, 16MB RAM, 4xCD, 200MB HDD ● Want: P200, 32MB RAM, 450MB HDD
- URL: www.redstorm.com

PCPP

FOR: Refreshing mix of genres, and the comic style is well implemented.

AGAINST: Lack of plot continuity, control options are limited.

65

GRAND PRIX WORLD

There's more to Grand Prix than just taking the car for a spin.

I love the smell of burnt rubber in the morning.

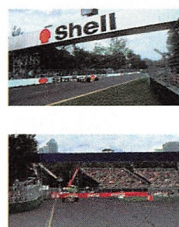
Team Ferrari, if their performance at the Melbourne F1 Grand Prix is anything to go by, are on the verge of their most successful season yet! The powerhouse of the last few years, McLaren, simply couldn't muster the engine reliability required for motor racing at its highest level, and is now content playing catch-up with the prancing stallions. However, until the engines of both their cars actually bid the race adieu, they were clearly in a class of their own! Can McLaren draw on the experience from previous successful seasons to position themselves in the number one spot again? Or will Ferrari, thirsty for a championship, finally break the drought?

Grand Prix World, fresh from gaming giants Microprose, offers Formula One fans worldwide the opportunity to answer these questions for themselves. By assuming the role of team director, the responsibility for team performance, be it good or bad, is placed firmly in your hands. Managing everything from sponsorship negotiations to chassis construction for the next season - all the essential elements that make-up a modern day F1



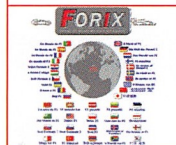
to check your email. Many managerial tasks are retaliatory efforts prompted by emails, which mostly come from various departments within the team itself. Damon Hill had sent an email stating that it would be stupid of me not to include him in more developmental testing of the '98 chassis, as my emphasis for him during last week's testing was more setup based in the hope of a good showing at Melbourne. The tone of this email had me searching desperately for the "Sack Whining Pommy Git!" button, but alas it was nowhere to be found.

Next on the agenda was a visit to the engineering department - a constant



extra

<http://www.forix.com/>
For the most comprehensive Formula One history and results database, this is the place!



click of the mouse, the selection was made. Lo and behold - Hill's advice paid off! His testing had uncovered a distinct handling problem in the chassis. Naturally, I got the team working on the situation immediately.

So far, I've only really covered half of the game and its available options. I haven't even gone into the running of the commercial department, which is an essential to the long-term survival of the team as anything else (F1 isn't exactly a cheap sport!). There's so much to fiddle with in GPW - it's a game that true racing buffs will gladly get lost in.

Grand Prix World is a worthy successor to Microprose's previous F1 management titles, and has thrust the genre into the new millennium in that truly classy style that can only be aligned with Formula One! Go get it NOW!

Edward Fox

"SEARCHING FOR THE 'SACK WHINING POMMY GIT' BUTTON"

team - are included in Grand Prix World. The only way to describe it all is to have a look at a day in the life of an average F1 team manager in Grand Prix World. Right!

A typical day

Managing the Jordan F1 team, some serious decisions have to be made after a dismal 9th & 10th finish at the '98 Australian Grand Prix. Where to start?

The most important task post-race is

hive of activity, the heart and lungs of any team. Almost everything technical is looked after in this area. From the workshop you can assign drivers and technicians to do testing, build spare parts, and research engine, tyre and fuel efficiency. With the cars seriously slow at Melbourne - in comparison to the top five - I decided to take Damon's advice by placing both him and Ralph Schumacher on a 60% development and a 40% testing ratio. With a simple

- Genre: F1 Management Sim ● Players: 1
- Developer: Microprose ● Publisher: Hasbro Interactive ● Distributor: Hasbro Interactive
- Price: \$69.95 ● Available: Now ● Rating: G
- Need: P233, 32MB RAM, 300 HDD, 4xCD ● Want: PII 350, 64MB RAM, 8xCD
- URL: www.microprose.com

PCPP **FOR:** Highly addictive, extremely fun and challenging! Everything you could want from a management game.
AGAINST: Races take too long... accelerated time feature could have been implemented better.

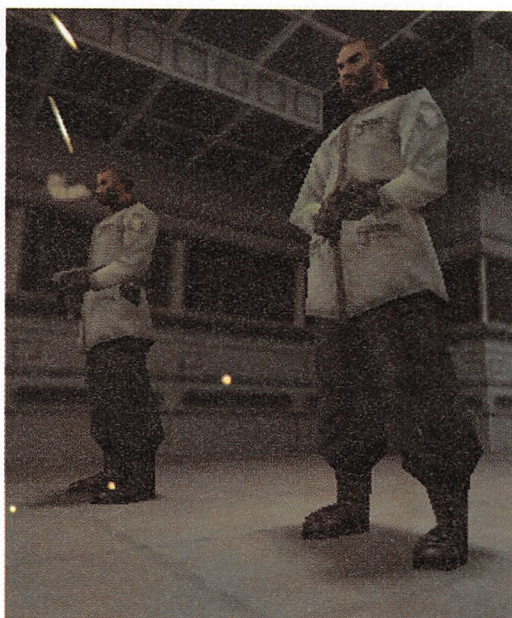
83

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

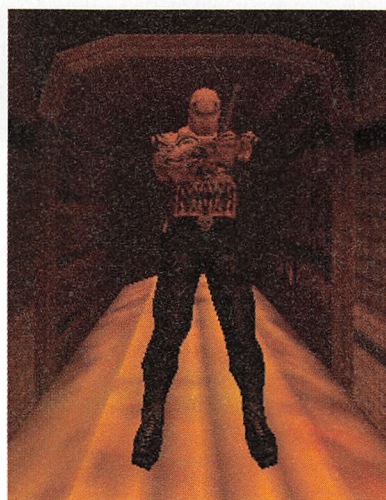
Morally dubious blood-fest or just a bit of a laugh? Ignore the gore and Raven's latest is just a fine firstperson shooter regardless.

tips

- Use the right mouse button for forward movement. It frees up a hand for quick actions such as strafe and lean.
- Always have the first aid kit selected as your default item for quick repairs.
- Don't wait for the auto-reload. Use the R key to reload whenever your magazine gets low - it will avoid those embarrassing moments during a firefight!
- Oil drums are often there for a purpose - shoot them and find out.
- If you can't find a way forward, crouch down and look for low passages or access pipes.
- Change to an automatic weapon before climbing ladders - there's almost always a warm reception waiting for you.
- Shoot everything you come across and then shoot it again!



Well...I did knock!



Oh well, I guess he's pretty 'armless now... Sorry.



Let's get the big issue out of the way right up front. With all the realism options turned on, *Soldier of Fortune* is a pretty violent game. By comparison, *Quake III* is for those of a gentle disposition, and *Unreal Tournament* is a hospitality industry training video. In *SoF* the enemy can be wounded in just about every part of their bodies, and the death scenes are fairly gruesome. Duke Nukem 3D was the last game to create such

uproar prior to its release, and the whole issue of violence in games is back in the spotlight. That said, a lot of the scandal is no doubt deliberate publicity hype, and Raven has included a content control that lets parents tone the whole thing down. Having played at length in both high and low violence modes, I have to say that this is a cracking game whichever way you look at it.

Let's go Shopping

Soldier of Fortune puts you in the role of ex-special forces soldier John Mullins. John has a fairly interesting history, including three tours of Vietnam and some questionable "special" assignments. He's a freelance expert these days, drawing most of his income from a shadowy UN anti-terrorist organisation called "The Shop." Along with some old

Army buddies, John continues to fight for the good guys - provided he's paid enough.

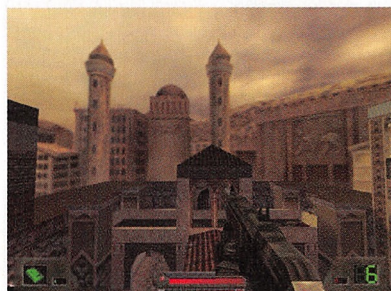
The basic premise of the game is that four nuclear warheads have fallen into the wrong hands, and it's your job to get them back and terminate the perpetrators. The chase will take you around the world, although you'll avoid most of the major tourist attractions! And once you've conquered the world on your own, a full range of competitive and cooperative multiplayer environments can be explored.

Raven has taken the proven *Quake II* engine and tweaked it enough to let *SoF* stand on its own in the gameplay stakes. It flies along, successfully combining killing everything in sight with a little bit of thought. The interface is straightforward, and anyone used to playing FPS games will jump straight in. Most importantly, *SoF* moves away from the recent trend by actually offering some great single player action.

Despite the storyline, this is no *Rogue Spear* in the tactics stakes. The emphasis is on grunt, and quick decisions



You just have to love the rocket launcher!



I'm getting to old for these Contiki Tours!

need to be made on the hop (shooting everything is usually the best decision!). Although the mission briefing outlines the objectives, no real guidance is provided prior to setting off, and most of the interaction with other friendly characters is through cutscenes.

Night Vision

Missions are generally briefed via email, after which you can select your preferred weapons and kit. All the usual weapons are available, including pistols, shotguns, and machine guns, supplemented by grenades and plastic explosives. As the game progresses, flamethrowers, microwave guns and rocket launchers add a little spice to the whole thing. Kit options include body



local friendlies may give you another task to complete before you tackle the main objective.

Controlling John Mullins is a simple affair with both mouse and keyboard, and he moves smoothly through the mission environment. A permanent 'run' setting is available in the options screen, and a combination of jumping and crouching will get you through most situations. Left and right "leans" give the more cautious the chance of a quick shot around corners, while the strafe option will satisfy those who prefer to charge straight in - provided your magazine doesn't run out in mid strafe! Weapon selection is by number key, and the use of special items, such as plastic explosives or a first aid kit, is as simple as hitting the Enter key. SoF shines in the information stakes, with an



GHOUL CAM

The GHOUL rendering engine is the key thing that sets SoF apart from other titles. It adds a bunch of functionality to the Quake II engine, from a developers perspective, but for most of us it's on show in the way targets react to wounds. All characters are divided into twenty-six "gore zones," and they react accordingly when hit. Wounds are messy, limbs can fly, and death scenes are gruesome. GHOUL allows for some very accurate shooting, permitting disabling wounds and one-shot kills, and items of equipment such as backpacks and weapons can also be targeted. Given the pace of the game, the novelty wears off fairly quickly.

graphical realism achieved during firefights, and the final release shows that the same degree of effort has gone into other aspects of the environment. In short - SoF looks outstanding. Buildings, vehicles and characters are fantastically well rendered, while shorted-out electrical cables, crumbling walls and lighting effects all add to the atmosphere. Seemingly unrelated actions also contribute to the feeling of immersion. Passing tanks, for example, might take pot shots at buildings, thereby creating convenient routes for you to use. At other times, you'll see and hear gun battles between the local warring factions. Add it all up, and SoF puts in an impressive showing in the "feel like you're there" stakes!

Continuity is achieved through the use of animated cutscenes. Opinions differ on this approach (and we've all seen plenty of games where their value was overplayed) but I think Raven has the balance about right. They're well done, and they provide a decent link between ►

March, what's that kung-fu stance called?



"COMBINING KILLING EVERYTHING IN SIGHT WITH A LITTLE BIT OF THOUGHT"

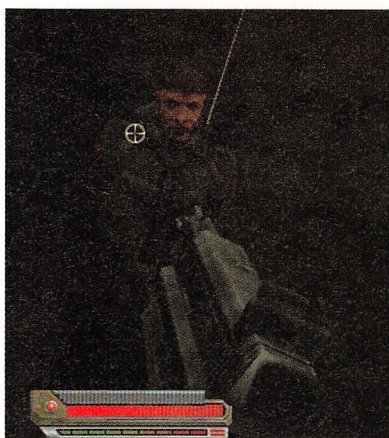
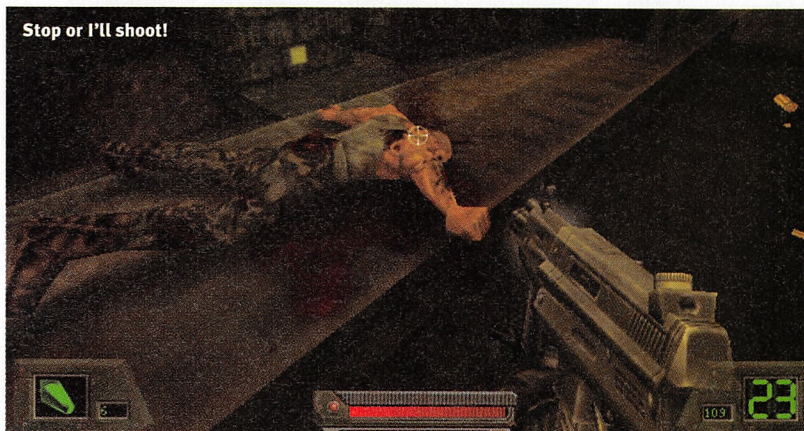
armour, first aid kits and NVG (Night Vision Goggles), and extra items and ammunition can be picked up throughout the game. Once you're happy with your selections, a short cutscene leads you into the mission environment, and you find yourself standing alone in enemy territory. Rest assured - a welcoming committee is on the way! In a nice touch,

unobtrusive pair of icons providing ammunition and equipment data, while a small armour and health meter completes the minimal on-screen clutter. None of it gets in the way, and everything you need is available at a glance.

Train-hopping

Our recent preview highlighted the

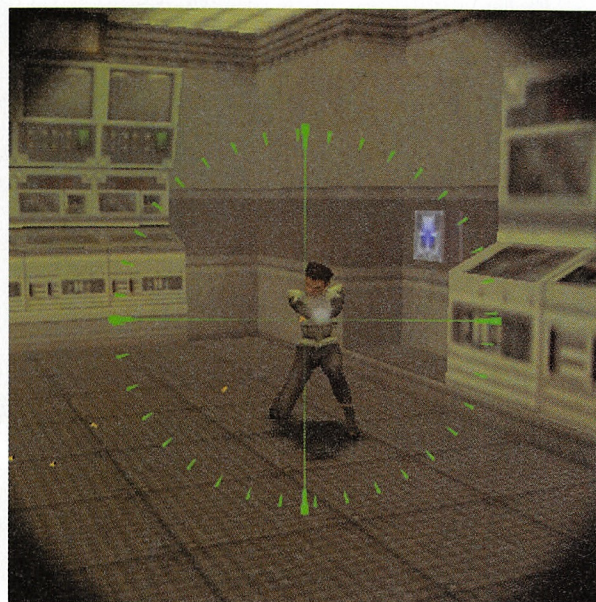
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE continued...



Try not to shoot the friendlies



I could use my rocket launcher, but I love a challenge!



► levels, as well as providing some situational awareness during missions. The very first mission offers a great example, in which you see the terrorist leader speed away on the roof of a train. The message is clear - jump on the next train roof you come across and get after him! On other occasions the effect of a particular action is made clear, such as a hangar door opening when you pull a lever, or a dam wall collapsing because you just had to turn that wheel!

No saves, please

Raven has taken difficulty options a step further than most similar titles, by allowing players to determine the number

of saves available in any game. Options range from none to unlimited, so players can ease themselves into high-end play. Given the fast pace of the action, a simple keystroke save would be better than jumping out to the options screen, but at least the thought is there. This is a very tough game at anything above medium difficulty, and you're going to need those saves! Almost everything can be customised - the numbers of enemy encountered, their health levels, weapons available to your character, and the number of item pickups. Such a high degree of configuration will make this a popular game amongst new FPS players and old hands, and should see SoF on

hard drives for a long time to come.

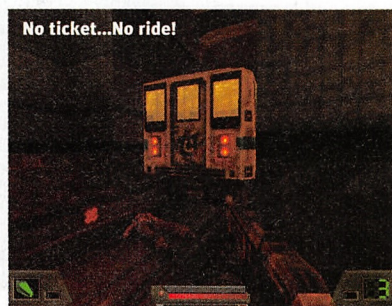
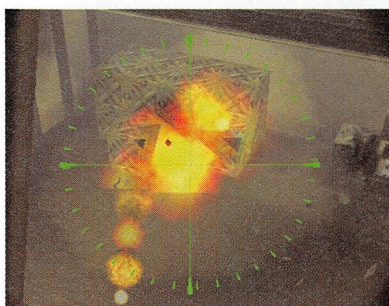
Opinions will differ on this game and feelings are going to run high. Some will say it's too violent, while others will point out the content control feature and argue the need for parental responsibility. At the end of the day, one aspect of a game - whether it's violence or pretty pictures - will not be enough to make it a great FPS. It needs a fast pace, smart enemy AI, an immersive environment, and hopefully a reasonable plot. Put the gory detail to one side and SoF has all of these things. Buy it and try it. If it's all too much for you then turn on the parental lock and you're still in for a great time!

Major Des McNicholas

extra

www.cia.gov/cia/ciakids

Yes, believe it or not the CIA has an official kid's homepage! Check it out to follow the adventures of Harry Recon - Ace Photo Pigeon! You may just find out what John Mullins was really up to in Vietnam.



PCPP	● Genre: Military Style FPS ● Players: 1-16	
	● Developer: Raven Software ● Publisher:	
	Activision ● Distributor: Activision	
	● Price: \$89-95 ● Available: ??? ● Rating: MA	
	● Need: P233, 64MB RAM, 3D Videocard (OpenGL), 800MB HDD ● Want: PIII, 128 MB	
PCPP	FOR: Great pace, easy to learn, and great visuals. Behind Half-Life, the best single player FPS on the shelves.	86
	AGAINST: The gruesome graphics add very little after some initial novelty value. No shortcut save key. The score	

put the pedal to the metal

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THEOCRACY

Theocracy: (noun), A form of government in which a deity is recognised as the supreme civil ruler.



Theocracy's FPS section? Not quite.

It's nice when you find a game that you can't help but like. There are obviously things that could be improved, for one reason or another, but the basics are there. Theocracy is just such a title. While the giants of the genre (think Age of Empires 2) aren't really in any danger from this type of game, the overall impression that Theocracy offers is of a solid title.

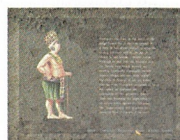
This is realtime strategy set in ancient American folklore. You control pre-Spanish invasion civilisations in 1400 AD as they deal out their inter-tribal... err... "diplomacy" and ultimately the defence against the Spaniards. Missions are drawn from various myths or folk tales concerning great figures and situations of the period. There's also a fantastic twist to proceedings, with the addition of priests being the most powerful of your



The two sides fought long hard - neither was going to surrender this vital, er... bit of dirt.

features of Theocracy is the fact that time essentially doesn't run in the Province screen - if you want to see a structure built or something produced, you have to exit to the Realm screen and allow time to pass there. Of course, this is not the case for combat; that takes place on the Province screen.

There's resource management involving building materials, trade for troop maintenance and economic pursuits, as well as for magic that requires human sacrifice (*Yikes! - Ed*). In all, it's the usual process of needing particular structures for certain training or trade options, and it's convincingly done. You can use trade and transport options to spread your communities



extra

www.unity.forcecg.co.uk/mcog/
Remember the Mysterious Cities of Gold? Mid-80s kids cartoon on the ABC, concerning hidden New World gold... terrific stuff!



games, and Theocracy would benefit from these kinds of improvements. The missions are really quite short and there are only 8 of them. I think this is the biggest stumbling block for the game. However, Prophecy mode is open-ended, giving you a century to develop your society, before the invasion.

With experience, the next title from Philos Laboratories in this style will hopefully be that much better. Theocracy is certainly an important title, in showing that they were on the right track. It's solid gaming, and while not exceptional doesn't put an obvious foot wrong along the way. The ambience is effective with the text introductions to missions and the occasional brutal yet suitably wild cutscenes. I can't help but feel great things coming from the Theocracy series. In the mean time, this game is solid where plenty aren't, and deserves attention just for that.

John Dewhurst

"DOESN'T PUT AN OBVIOUS FOOT WRONG ALONG THE WAY"

units. Through the priests' connection to the gods, you are able to use powerful magic with your forces.

Human sacrifice

There are a number of perspectives on play, the most important being the Province and the Realm screens. All of your tinkering takes place on the Province screen, while more large-scale operations need to happen on the Realm screen. One of the defining

into other provinces, allowing the expansion of your empire.

Obscure prophecies

Some of the problems with Theocracy concern fine-tuning. The interface can be a little obscure at times and the map screen shows virtually nothing of practical use except your units. Things like pop-up labels on buttons and some intuitive control options make a real difference in these

- Genre: Religious Realtime Strategy ● Players: 1-6
- Developer: Philos Laboratories ● Publisher: Ubisoft ● Distributor: Ubisoft
- Price: TBA ● Available: NOW ● Rating: TBA
- Need: P233, 64MB RAM, 10xCD, 250MB HDD ● Want: PII 400, 128MB RAM, 32xCD
- URL: www.theocracy.com

PCPP

FOR: Gotta love it when you can feel some effort put into a game!

AGAINST: Interface could be a little more friendly, too few single player campaigns.

76

TIGER WOODS USA TOUR 2000

March tricked me into reviewing this one by saying that he was sending me an "artillery related simulation." Fortunately, a flying golfball still packs a real punch.

EA Sports has developed an excellent reputation for quality sport sims over the years, and Tiger Woods USA Tour 2000 maintains that tradition. The net result is a game that looks and feels great, provided you have a system powerful enough to make the most of it - anything less than a high end PII and you may as well turn the page.

It's all in the wrist

USA 2000 is probably the best looking golf sim I've come across. Three new courses have been added since the 1999 release (79% PCPP#31), including Piper Glen, Heron Bay and Prestancia, while EA's mainstay, Pebble Beach, seems to have been given a major makeover. On a good system the graphics are truly stunning - Heron Bay is worth it just for the stroll, never mind the golf! Aside from Tiger Woods, all of the big-name USA Tour players are available for a round, and EA has also included "golf's most famous amateur," Michael Jordan. All are well-rendered and their personalities have been captured nicely. In a remarkable innovation, players also have the chance to play online against real golfers in both live and archived rounds from the USA Tour season.

"EA HAVE ALSO INCLUDED 'GOLF'S MOST FAMOUS AMATEUR,' MICHAEL JORDAN"

EA has retained the swing technology used last year, so veterans of the series will have no problems jumping straight into the game. In any case, the Swing Meter is simple and intuitive, using either the mouse or space bar. As in all golf sims, you have the choice of accepting the AI recommendations for clubs and shot types, or taking complete control over the whole process. To help make those critical decisions, key data, such as wind speed and direction, shot distance and lie information are all available on-screen, as well as an overhead view of the hole. A fly-by tour of the fairway is available to help plan your approach to the green, and EA's new Green Reader provides layout, slope and hole placement information once you pull out your putter.

USA Tour plays realistically (I base this on the fact that I'm lousy at the real thing and I was lousy at this as



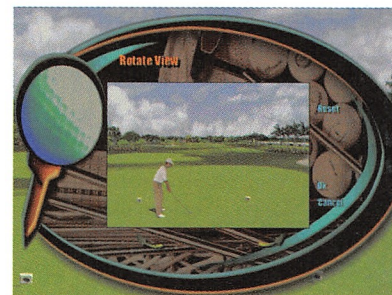
well!). Skill levels include Novice, Amateur and Pro, each with varying degrees of difficulty and realism. At the Pro level, you're pretty much on your own, as the AI offers no advice and the

slightest error translates into a missed opportunity. Practice swings can be taken at all levels, and spins, fades or draws applied to the ball. Brilliant shots can be replayed from any angle and saved to a highlights section, or Mulligans invoked for those that didn't quite make the grade! A Simulation Mode is also available, in which you can make your way around the course playing perfect golf - a great way for new players to start off.

Swing it, baby

Tiger Woods USA Tour is a challenging simulation with great online potential. Admittedly, there's only so much you can do with a golf sim, but this one shows enough fine-tuning to make it a worthwhile investment for newcomers and fans of the series.

Major Des McNicholas

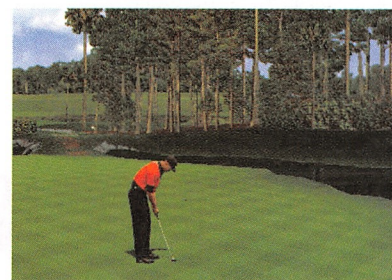


Major Des works on his driving.



extra

Check out the Movie CD Golf's Goof-ups and Miraculous Moments for some of the craziest and brilliant golf footage you're ever likely to see.



- Genre: Golf Sim ● Players: 1 - 4
- Developer: EA Sports ● Publisher: EA Sports ● Distributor: Electronic Arts
- Price: \$79.95 ● Available: Now ● Rating: G
- Need: PII, 32MB RAM, 100MB HDD, 3D Videocard ● Want: PIII 450, 64MB RAM, 600 MB HDD ● URL: www.easports.com

PCPP

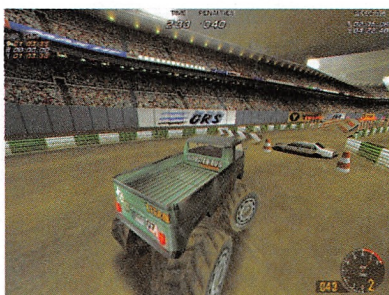
FOR: Great graphics, simple interface, and wholly configurable. Plenty of courses.

AGAINST: High system requirements. Refinement of an old formula rather than something new.

84

BEETLE CRAZY CUP

Infogrames provide the most played - but also the most cursed - game in the office this month.

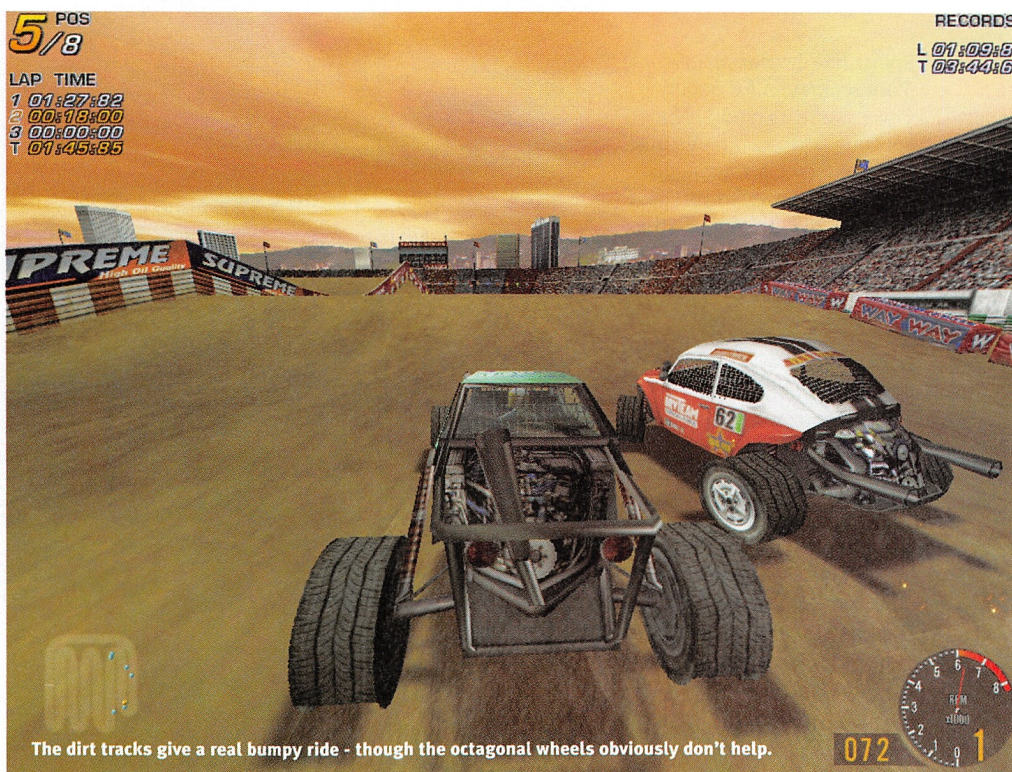


Monster trucking is damn challenging.

Firstly, I just want to make one thing clear: Beetle Crazy Cup is an enormous amount of fun. Yes, it will piss you off greatly. Yes, you're likely to have significantly less hair at the end of each playing session. And yes, there may well be several more dents in your keyboard, too. But - BUT! - despite all that, Beetle Crazy Cup is still a hoot to play.

Well-designed...

It works for a couple of reasons. One, the overall design is nigh-on perfect. A Single Race option lets you compete in any one of the five distinct racing modes. The Championship is split into three separate cups, each comprised of three races spread across the different modes. Points are accumulated for finishing 7th or higher, with the later cups only unlocked through finishing first. Finally, the game's centrepiece is the Beetle



The dirt tracks give a real bumpy ride - though the octagonal wheels obviously don't help.

Yikes!

Rewarding is the best way to describe Beetle Crazy Cup's structure. The player is always encouraged to enter the next race - and win it. Whether the incentive is another car or another challenge, the temptation remains to keep on playing in spite of defeat.

The other reason why it's so good is the immense variety between racing modes and the cars required for each. Speed is an exhilarating rush through Ridge Racer territory. Monster has you navigating an obstacle course in a lumbering monster truck. Buggy alternates between the beach and some resort-style strips. Cross is kinda like Dirt Track Racing, all powerslides and figure-



racing modes, the number of tracks is disappointing at best. In fact, it won't take very long at all before you find yourself repeating them. Racing at night or - sigh - backwards fail to excite like a brand new course does. Further, compared to the likes of Re-Volt (the best arcade racing game on the PC), there's a real personality vacuum. Sure, the VW is a cute car and the combi-van looks amusingly ridiculous in a racing environment. But, really, it's not quite enough, is it? Also, I would have preferred a little more strategy when it comes to upgrading cars. As it is, the decision of whether to buy or not is a no-brainer: when you see a new car, it's always better than your old one.

There is a heck of a lot to like about Beetle Crazy Cup. If there wasn't, it wouldn't have been the most played game in the PCPP office this month.

David Wildgoose

extra

www.vw.com
This slick site has more beetle info than you'll ever need. Check out the merchandise section for the full beetle experience!



"THE COMBI-VAN LOOKS RIDICULOUS IN A RACING ENVIRONMENT"

Challenge. Here, entry to each of the five modes is immediately open, but each contains four tiers that must be beaten to progress. Sound good so far? Well, if you think that's enough, think again. Beating each tier in the Beetle Challenge not only unlocks a series of bonus races, but provides you with the cash to purchase some of the fifty (fifty!) odd cars in the game. And - AND! - once you complete all the tiers in all the modes, the World Beetle Challenge then becomes available.

eight tracks. Last is the Jump, which is - I should expect - fairly self-evident. All the cars handle in a drastically different fashion, likewise the various terrains they're driven through. It's almost like five different games in one.

But not well-endowed

The unfortunate aspect of Beetle Crazy Cup is that, having set up this brilliant game design, developer Xpiral hasn't capitalised enough. Even with the five

● Genre: Ker-razy Racing! ● Players: 1-6
● Developer: Xpiral ● Publisher: Infogrames ● Distributor: Ozisoft
● Price: \$79.95 ● Available: Now ● Rating: G
● Need: P166, 8MB Videocard (D3D), 32MB RAM, 300MB HDD, 8xCD ● Want: PII 300, 64MB RAM, 300MB HDD ● URL: www.beetlecrazycup.com

PCPP

FOR: A brilliant design supported by lovely graphics. Long term appeal is guaranteed.

AGAINST: Not enough of the tracks are genuinely different. Lacking in the charisma department.

74

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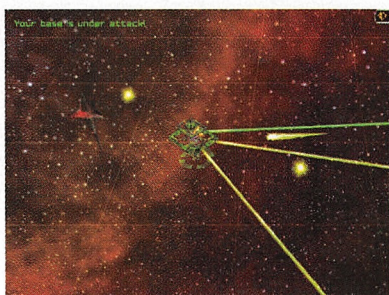
HN21715

STAR TREK: ARMADA

Sexy bald captains ahoy!

tips

Resource gathering is an endless task - make sure you set your Dilithium mines near to the source, so that your mining operations run smooth and fast. There is terrain in this space RTS title... the different coloured nebulae have different effects on your crafts' weapons, shields, etc. Use this to your advantage when setting up a base or as a way to steer the battle in your favour.



Few patrons checked out of the Borg hotel.



Stardate 53550.0 Captain's Log:
Now that the war in the Alpha Quadrant has finally ended, I anticipated our mission there would be peaceful. This was not to be. Not only were we attacked by Dominion ships,

but we received a strange visitor from the future. Cpt. Deming came to warn us of an impending Borg attack on the Alpha Quadrant and the dire consequences for the future because of it. Despite the Federation's regulations on this matter, I agreed to help.

Perhaps this Cpt. Deming can be of assistance elsewhere. My investments are dire at best and I would like to know what is skyrocketing in the stock markets of the near future. With my new-found wealth I will be able to polish my scalp with the very best that the Klingons have to offer...

Klingons on the...

Star Trek: Armada is Activision's placement of Picard, Worf and the rest into Starcraft mode. The single player missions take you through the Federation, Klingon, Romulan and finally the Borg forces with a narrative skipping in and out of the action. A useful device for a game that wants to promote its multiplayer aspects and one that's being seen a lot at the moment.

For a start, the introduction and cutscene movies are fantastic. You don't get much better than this, with Patrick Stewart again in the recording booth to record some dialogue. Pretty 3D cinematics work well to complement a quality story that involves factional intrigue between the three "goodies". Of course, you have a chance to control all of them, especially the Borg.

The action itself is fairly solid stuff, though to be honest, run-of-the-mill drag-selection strategy gaming. Want something destroyed? Send a couple of

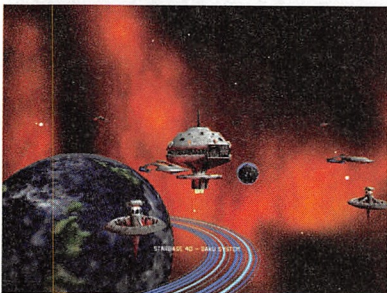
ships over there and have them attack it. Need to research? Build a research facility. Need some defences? Build some. We've seen it before, only this time around it has a Star Trek flavour.

Starboard bow...

The controls are nothing special while managing to not be entirely useless. You have the standard array of commands, and only some are of any use at all - namely move, build and attack. There are some good ideas here that are just badly executed. Take for the example the "Search & Destroy" command. There is no way to customise this command, so your star ships will scatter in random directions, and when they find something most likely get cut down by the clusters of enemy craft. Truly useless.

Did I mention Starcraft? Well, with four races in Armada, you'd expect that a lot of different styles of play would be presented - don't make any assumptions, okay? There are some differences between the Romulans, Federation, Borg and Klingons. For example, the Romulans have cloaking





Kids' spinning tops constituted the bulk of space junk.



Beware the translucent grid.

technology. Admittedly there are some unique craft in individual races' arsenal (like the Klingons' Jach'eng "suicide" ship). However, there just isn't enough new to do with each race. The fact that there are equivalent structures and craft in all races gives a sort of bland sameness.

Starboard bow...

And how ugly is this game? Not THAT ugly. Well, in the lean moments of Homeworld, you could at least take a step back and say, "Goddamn, this is one beautiful game!" Not really the case with Armada. While you have the nebula effects, the swirling wormholes, etc., it just looks so ordinary, so plain. There is not a lot of charm in the visual presentation at all.

And I'm sure I read some advertising saying this was a 3D title.

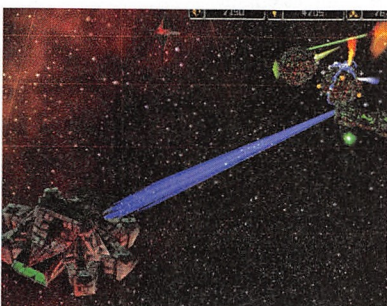


It certainly presents the ships in three dimensions but that's all. While your camera has limited movement in three dimensions, all of the ships only move on two... which is a let down really! The only concession to 3D gaming are in "Director's Cut" mode, where ships can stack or battle in three

dimensions. I find myself wondering why Activision didn't enlist the help of Relic for an engine, since this baby looks a year old at least.

Starboard bow!

Star Trek is all about characters, and conflict resolution comes through the character interaction. In this light,



GREAT GAMES: THE FINAL FRONTIER

As franchises go, Star Trek maintains considerable clout, considering that it started out as a 60s TV show. It has a definite morality and narrative feel to it and those shows that have tried to continue in its wake (Babylon 5 et al) give at least a passing nod to Star Trek's style.

Despite these facts, we're still waiting for some definitive gaming goodness featuring this science fiction legend. A quick perusal of PCPP scores of Star Trek games sees the most of the bunch sitting in the mid to high 80s - Star Trek Academy and Birth of the Federation got into the 90s. When will the mind-blowing Star Trek title emerge? Not soon enough for my money.

games in the Star Trek universe that centre on action or warfare make a lot less sense, since in the show, often the battle has been fought and won already through dialogue. However, Starfleet Command (87%, PCPP #43) was an admirable example of action in the Trek universe, so I guess Armada is just a

lesser game.

Frankly, Star Trek: Armada is more of the same in the RTS genre, and even fails to provide a decent Star Trek storyline - I'd rather rent First Contact. One to be savoured by the fanatical Trekkie who won't listen to logic that says it's all a bit crap.

John Dewhurst

"THERE ARE SOME GOOD IDEAS HERE THAT ARE JUST BADLY EXECUTED"

extra

cinepad.com/borg.htm

Nothing to do with Star Trek, this is a satirical dig at Microsoft and Lord knows we haven't had enough of that yet! So Bill Gates walks into a bar...



- Genre: Real Time Strategy ● Players: 1 - 8
- Developer: Activision ● Publisher: Activision ● Distributor: Activision
- Price: \$TBA ● Available: NOW ● Rating: G
- Need: P200, 32MB RAM, 600MB HDD ● Want: PII 300, 64MB RAM, 3D Videocard
- URL: www.activision.com

PCPP

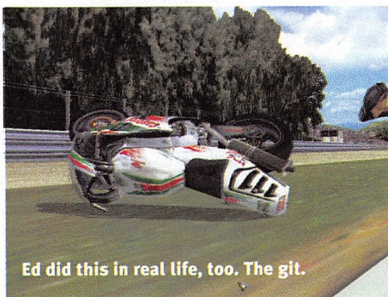
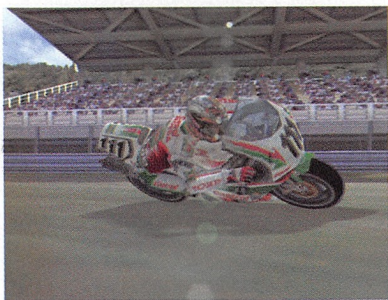
FOR: The license, the actors, passable RTS gaming.

AGAINST: Nothing new or particularly exciting.

56

SUPERBIKE 2000

As the only PCPP scribe to enter the office in a helmet, Ed was the natural choice to take EA's Superbike sequel for a spin.



EA Sports has done it again! Only one year on since they impressed us with the amazing Superbike World Championship, they've delivered the goods again in a slick, gold-plated package titled Superbike 2000. Offering the opportunity to battle it out with the likes of Carl Fogarty and Aaron Slight (get well soon) on beasts like the blistering Honda RC45 and Yamaha R7 carving machine, Superbike 2000 is a classic example of that rare occasion when virtual motorists are brought one step closer to realism.

Photo realistic

Oddly, the main menu screen is rather bland and dull, which is something we don't often see in EA titles regardless of the game quality. Race modes are also a little lacking - there is no practice option, and

the four-wheeled classic Grand Prix Legends. The ease with which the bike can move from a vertical position to a horizontal one is a frustrating tendency that must constantly be kept in toe, whilst at the same time trying to win a race.

The bikes are quite literally the best seen in any motorcycle sim. However, the true level of quality can't be appreciated until you've seen it at a resolution of 1024 x 768. There is a neat setting within the video control options called "Photo Realistic", and it's when this feature is turned on that you could easily be forgiven for thinking you're watching a live TV replay! Additionally, all thirteen of the included circuits are very highly detailed and have been sculptured almost identically to the real thing. No longer do the circuits seem like ghost towns, as there are hundreds of spectators visible both in the stands

however, happy to announce that this is most definitely not the case in Superbike 2000. The bikes behave almost exactly like the real thing. Too much gas or stoppers into a corner and you'll be scrubbing the dirt or looking for a soft place to land. On the other hand, just the right amount of throttle will produce some brilliant, corner-carving slides.

It's the combination of wondrous visuals and highly accurate physics that makes Superbike 2000 the success that it is. Even though it doesn't quite knock GP500 from the number one position in the bike sim genre, it's definitely made the competition that much tighter.

Edward Fox

"TOO MUCH GAS AND YOU'LL BE SCRUBBING THE DIRT"

mastering this difficult sim is made a lot more troublesome when attempted in traffic. The game does feature, however, the usual array of sound, video and controller options to fiddle about with.

The most important thing anyone should know about Superbikes 2000 is that it's a bloody difficult sim! I would even go as far as to say, in order to challenge the sophisticated well implemented AI (on the harder settings, naturally), you'll need the same level of skill and concentration as is required for

and at various vantage points around the track. Unfortunately, the graphics engine is not flawless, and mild glitches present themselves here and there. I'd like to think that EA is currently at work on a patch to sort out these issues, along with the troublesome net play.

Full throttle

Lots of sims released these days try to pass for the real thing simply by offering nice visuals, with the poor ol' physics engine generally left lacking. I am,

extra

www.ausmoto.com.au
If you're looking to purchase a bike, then this site is a great place to start.



● Genre: Motorcycle Simulator ● Players: 1 - 8
● Developer: EA Sports ● Publisher: Electronic Arts ● Distributor: Electronic Arts
● Price: \$69.95 ● Available: NOW ● Rating: G
● Need: P233, 32MB RAM, 250MB HDD, 4xCD, 16-bit Videocard ● Want: PII350, 128MB RAM, 300MB HDD, 3D Videocard (D3D), 8xCD ● URL: www.easports.com

PCPP

FOR: Amazing, almost photo-realistic visuals. Impressively physics engine.

AGAINST: Terrible network play, audio is left wanting, minor graphical glitches.

89

MIGHT & MAGIC VIII: DAY OF THE DESTROYER

We've all been going a little "old-skool" this month (Metroid, Wasteland, Chronotrigger), but this was just a bit too retro to stomach.

Planescape: Torment, then - what a truly incredible game. With its awesome depth of character interaction and fantastic, mesmerising, soul-searching and deeply moving story, Torment could easily be mistaken for a work of great literature. Well, okay, maybe I'm exaggerating a little, but I do think it's fair to say that in crafting Torment, Black Isle was touched by genius.

On the other hand, were it a novel, even the Drunken Dwarf's Heroes & Hobgoblins fanzine would refuse to publish a serialisation of Might & Magic VIII. This, ladies and gentlemen, is high fantasy, loaded with elves, wizards and fozzles, and with an emphasis on sheer nonsense.

Geriatric

But then again, so were all the previous incarnations of New World's venerable (which is simply a nice way of saying really, really old) roleplaying series. Might & Magic VIII even re-uses the game engine that "powered" the previous two chapters, the only discernible attempt at invigoration being a slightly larger view portal. The benefit of this enhancement isn't immediately obvious, since all that seems to be gained is the amount of screen space consumed by the atrocious 3D graphics.

I recall managing to just barely tolerate the basic terrain, replica people, garish textures, and ugly bitmapped monsters back in 1997 when I reviewed Might & Magic VI. The three year duration since hasn't been kind to this



The architecture has improved slightly.



It's not just the cringingly outdated 3D engine that spoils your enjoyment of what is at heart a solid hack 'n' slash RPG experience. The uselessness of the enemy AI does much to dispel any sense of immersion, likewise the primitive dialogue system.

Torture

In its favour, Day of the Destroyer presents its quests in a rather more interesting manner than did its predecessors. While many of them are essentially errand boy in nature, it is clear greater effort has been spent integrating them into the over-arching plot. Sadly,



Ooh, look! New stuff! Meet the new characters - the Vampire and Troll.



amalgamated, leaving you with an initial choice of knight, cleric, vampire, necromancer, troll, minotaur and dark elf for your sole character. Later, your party can be filled out to a healthy five in number, and possibly even include a dragon. And, um, that's about all that's changed.

Which brings me back to where I began. Prior to Planescape: Torment, Might & Magic VIII would have appeared a wheezing, rheumatic, old codger - not without a certain charm, but you wouldn't want to spend much time in its company. Now, I think we all know what is the most humane thing to do...

David Wildgoose

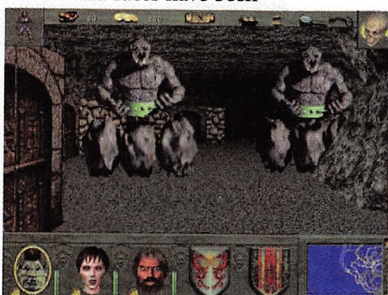
"AT HEART A SOLID HACK 'N' SLASH RPG EXPERIENCE"

engine. Of course, there is a flipside to this: while I was sniggering at the way a centaur warlord is distinguished from an ordinary centaur only through being coloured purple from head-to-toe, it struck me that New World has produced the last three Might & Magic games with this engine in half the time it took Origin to finish Ultima: Ascension.



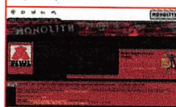
though, this new, narrative-focused approach falls short of the removal of the painfully large dungeon trawls that make all Might & Magic games such torture at times.

Elsewhere, further additions include the expected batch of new weapons, armour and magic items. Character classes and races have been



extra

www.lith.com
Might & Magic IX will use the funky Lithtech engine. It's pretty swish.



- Genre: Party Management ● Players: 1
- Developer: New World ● Publisher: 3DO ● Distributor: Jack of all Games
- Price: TBA ● Available: NOW ● Rating: M
- Need: P166, 32MB RAM, 4xCD, 375MB HDD ● Want: PII, 64MB RAM
- URL: www.mightandmagic.com

PCPP

FOR: An improvement on the previous Might & Magic games. Fans will appreciate the better quest structure.

AGAINST: Deeply old-fashioned roleplaying that's weak in its story-telling, interaction, and combat.

55

SCORE LIST

THE PAST YEAR IN GAMING. THIS MONTH: **BEST ROLEPLAYING GAMES**

GAME NAME SCORE ISSUE#



12 O'Clock High	68	#46
Abomination	81	#44
● Age of Empires 2	94	#42
Age of Wonders	84	#46
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Breakneck	86	#39
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Castrol Superbikes 2000	85	#42
Championship Manager 3	85	#38
Civ: Test of Time	81	#41
Clans	48	#42
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Corsairs	65	#40
● Cricket World Cup '99	93	#38
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Darkstone	68	#42
Delta Force 2	78	#46
● Descent 3	95	#38
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Disciples	81	#43
Discworld Noir	83	#39
Dracula	58	#47
Drakan	84	#43
Driver	71	#43
● Dungeon Keeper 2	90	#41
Eastern Front II	85	#39
Eidos Official F1	65	#39
● Episode 1 Racer	90	#39

Everquest

Developer: Verant

Publisher: Sony

Distributor: Hilad

What we said then: "If the thought of spending hundreds of hours logged on to the internet appeals to you, then read on... The ability to customise your character's face according to their charisma is a novelty - the butt-ugly female troll is a sight to behold. Everquest is more of an experience than a computer game."

● **90% IN PCPP#39**

F22 Lightning 3	85	#40
● F/A 18 Hornet	91	#47
FA Prem. League Stars	71	#42
FIFA 2000	88	#45
Fighter Squadron	85	#37
Fighting Steel	80	#41
Final Fantasy VIII	77	#47
Fleet Command	89	#39
Flight Unlimited III	89	#43
Fly!	85	#42
● Force 21	90	#42
Ford Racing	72	#48
Fox Sports NBA 2000	56	#44

● Freespace 2	95	#44
Gabriel Knight III	87	#44
Gorky 17	65	#47
● GP 500	96	#43
Grand Theft Auto 2	84	#44
GTA London	75	#38
Gruntz	45	#37
Guardians of Darkness	30	#41
Gulf War: Desert Hammer	55	#45
● Half-Life: Opposing Force	90	#45
● Heavy Gear II	93	#40
HOMM III: Armageddon's Blade	70	#45
Hidden and Dangerous	88	#41
H & D: Fight for Freedom	45	#46
● Homeworld	95	#41
I-War: Defiance	72	#44
Imperialism 2	72	#37
● Imperium Galactica 2	92	#46
Indiana Jones & Infernal Machine	69	#45
Interstate '82	60	#47
Invictus	51	#48

Messiah	89	#48
Midtown Madness	89	#40
● Mig Alley	92	#42
Might & Magic VII	70	#40
Mike Stewart's Bodyboarding	34	#40
MS Flight Sim 2000	84	#44
NASCAR 3	89	#44
Nascar Revolution	35	#48
Nascar Road Racing	28	#41
Nascar Truck	80	#38
Nations: Fighter Command	82	#44
NBA Inside Drive 2000	68	#46
● NBA Live 2000	90	#45
Need for Speed: High Stakes	89	#41
Nerf Arena	70	#46
NHL Championship 2000	78	#46
Nocturne	79	#46
North vs. South	67	#37

Nox

Developer: Westwood

Publisher: EA

Distributor: EA

What we said then: "Players take a Warrior, Conjurer or Wizard through a series of adventures where they grow in experience, find magic doodads and go shopping for new goodies. Nox is a great ride, from the simple story to the gnashing traps and swarming critters."

83% IN PCPP#48

Omikron: Nomad Soul

Developer: Quantic Dream

Publisher: Eidos

Distributor: Ozisoft

What we said then: "Traversing an astonishing broad range of gameplay elements - a strong narrative, firstperson shooter action, plentiful character interaction and puzzle solving, hand-to-hand combat set-pieces, driving sequences, et al - it emerges as the foremost contender for the title of the Complete Game."

● **93% IN PCPP#44**



Operation Art of War 2	84	#42
Outcast	59	#40
Pandora's Box	68	#47
Panzer Elite	85	#46
Pharaoh	88	#45
Phoenix	64	#46

Planescape: Torment

Developer: Black Isle

Publisher: Interplay

Distributor: Interplay

What we said then: "The Nameless One lies dead on a slab, tormented by nothing more tangible than visions and memories, locked in his own corpse and unable to die. Planescape was created... with an extremely mature philosophy where ethics and behaviour control the universe, and belief and faith are more powerful than any spell or sword."

● **91% IN PCPP#46**

Prince of Persia 3D	65	#43
Pro18 World Tour Golf	69	#38
Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey	88	#47
Puma Street Soccer	75	#46
● Quake III: Arena	93	#45
● Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	92	#44
Rally Championship 2000	88	#45
Rayman 2	89	#45
Re-Volt	82	#41
Redline	83	#37
● Requiem - Avenging Angel	90	#38
Resident Evil 2	88	#37
Revenant	82	#45
Rising Sun	82	#48
Rollcage	90	#38
R'coaster Tyc: Added Attractions	81	#45
Saga: Rage of the Vikings	42	#40
Sega Rally 2	68	#41

Septerra Core

Developer: Valkyrie

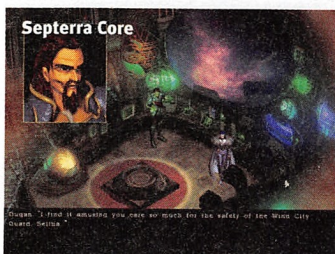
Publisher: Monolith

Distributor: Jack of all Games

What we said then: "The magic system in Septerra Core is both flexible and simple, as well as being pretty cool. A rich and fast-paced tale of grand proportions, memorable characters... and great, blue-haired, giant gun-toting, magic-slinging action... Septerra Core captures the feel of Japanese animation superbly..."

84% IN PCPP#47

Seven Kingdoms 2	86	#44
Shadow Company	74	#44
Shadow Man	61	#41
Shane Warne Cricket	86	#37



The Sims

Developer: Maxis

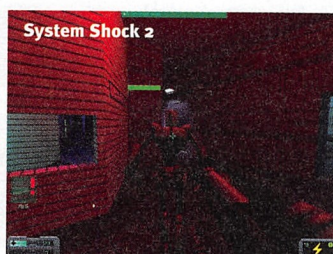
Publisher: EA

Distributor: EA

What we said then: "Maxis simply calls the game a people simulator, but really, that's about as useful a description as calling life a Great Big Game. The Sims is an interesting concoction made up of strategy and roleplaying elements, with a bit of philosophy and the glorious randomness of luck thrown in for good measure. Completely unique."

● **90% IN PCPP#47**

Sin - Wages of Sin	73	#38
Skydive!	12	#42
Slave Zero	55	#47
Soul Reaver: Legacy Of Kain	81	#43
South Park Rally	41	#47
Spec Ops 2	60	#46
Speed Demons	55	#47
● Sports Car GT	90	#40
● Star Trek: BOTF	90	#39
Star Trek: Hidden Evil	69	#46
Star Trek: Starfleet Command	87	#43
● Starsiege	90	#37



SU-27 Flanker 2.0	83	#44
● SWAT 3	90	#46

System Shock 2

Developer: Irrational

Publisher: EA

Distributor: EA

What we said then: "System Shock 2's ability to immerse you in its world is simply phenomenal. You'll gasp in awe at the extraordinary, and be moved to tears by insights into the day to day lives, desires and fates of the Von Braun's occupants. Games of this calibre are truly a rarity..."

● **98% IN PCPP#42**

The Phantom Menace	76	#39
The Wheel of Time	84	#45
● Thief Gold	96	#45
Theme Park World	80	#45
Thrust, Twist & Turn	30	#39
● TOCA 2	91	#37
Tomb Raider: Last Revelation	89	#43
Total Annihilation: Kingdoms	84	#40
Traitor's Gate	78	#44
UEFA 98/99	71	#38
Ultima Online	68	#48
Ultima IX: Ascension	70	#45
Unreal: Return to Na Pali	72	#41
● Unreal Tournament	94	#45
Urban Chaos	85	#46
Virtual Deep Sea Fishing	63	#38
Warbirds 2	81	#37
Warzone 2100	88	#38
World Manager	34	#48
● X-Wing Alliance	94	#37



QUIZ!

WIN YOUR CHOICE OF THE BEST OF ROLEPLAYING!

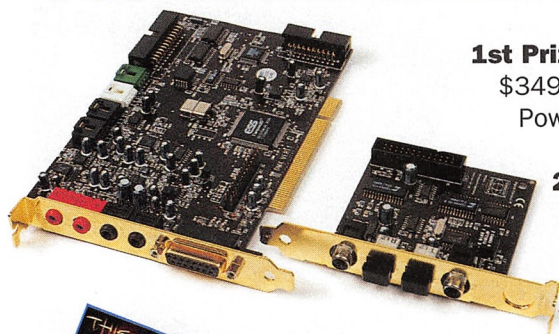
All you have to do is tell us which game this image comes from. (Clue: it's a small section of a screenshot published in PCPP.)

Send to the usual competitions address, marking your envelope to "Best of Roleplaying", and writing your answer on the back. Don't forget to tell us which game of the eight featured on these pages you would like to win. Winners notified in PCPP#51.



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Issue #47 Winners

Atari PC Games Winners: Alex Richardson, QLD, Mr S Steward, NSW, David Barnes, NSW, Z Cranney, SA, Edward Scott, NSW, Scott Boyer, VIC, Graham Henley, QLD, Josh Conner, WA, Iain Selth, QLD, Matt Yorston, QLD

Nerfarena Atari PC Games and Paintball Winners: Barnabas Goh, VIC, Lee Lahtinen, QLD, Angus Boyd, QLD, Joseph McAceer, VIC, Merv Zell, NSW, Luke Williams, VIC, Hayden Nebel, WA, Matt Szorenyi, NSW, Malcolm Wragg, NSW, Lachlan Bromage, NSW

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The Oracle

HEADLINES: Nox Playguide • Battlezone 2 Playguide • Age of Empires II Web Resources • The Sims Web Resources • And of course the Great Bearded One

CODE

Pharaoh

Show some benevolence and help the homeless - or maybe you've just got the Olympics around the corner. Either way, this cheat is really very useful. While your city is bustling away, press **Ctrl+Alt+Shift+C**, then type in "help homeless". In a kind of Ancient Egyptian work-for-the-dole scheme, all your homeless people will now help the rest of the population with any outstanding construction sites in the city. If that's still too much like hard work - and we can sympathise with the plight of any sovereign called upon to do any work at all - then try this in the game's campaign mode. In the game, press **Ctrl+Alt+Shift+C**, then type in "Pharaohs Tomb". You will instantly win the current scenario and advance to the next. Yippee, as they say in The Settlers.

Star Trek: Hidden Evil

Expose the evil for all to see with these ever-so-convenient-but-nonetheless-diabolically-not-good-for-you cheats. Type the following codes during the game to activate the corresponding cheat function:
KIRK - unlimited health
SPOCK - skip level
BONES - add Hypospray to inventory
SCOTTY - all keys and passcards

The Oracle is a Wisdom Dispensing Service. He cannot abide cheaters. Write to him at:
Oracle
PC PowerPlay
Level 6 418a Elizabeth St.
Surry Hills, NSW 2010
oracle@pcpowerplay.next.com

Fallen Haven

Q> Oracle, could I please get some cheats for the Fallen Haven demo?

Andrew Wiegand

A> Firstly, this man obviously never reads the oracle. Secondly, he gave a postal address. Thirdly, he was very rude. From now on, and this is important, anybody who asks for cheats from me, the Oracle, will be mercifully mocked. Cheats can be found elsewhere and are not supplied by me. You. Have. Been. Warned.

The Phantom Menace

Q> Forgive me oh wise and great oracle, for I have cheated. I've finished that finale bit on level 11 with the red shields and the hole in the middle with cheats but now, to clear my conscience, I want to know how to finish the finale. I've figured it must be something to do with that hole in the middle, but I can't do much other than run away without getting killed. Please help me for if I do not do this without cheats, I will be drawn to the dark side of the force!

Obi-Wan Kenobi



A> You're not quite the Jedi Knight you pretend to be (I'm rather fond of Obi-Wan. He reminds me of me), but nonetheless I shall attempt to solve your question. Grammar, children! And be specific.

OK. That big hole in the middle is one of the ways you can achieve victory. Fight Maul, remembering always to jump around, never stopping to duel him until you can lever him closer to the pit. Then shoot him so he is forced to block the blasts. Then Force him into the pit. If you can't do that, drop thermal detonators onto him, try and find a position to stand where the ludicrous AI will let you shoot him, or simply get in and out fast as you can. Be aware that in the little alcove to the side of the rooms are secret passages with lots of goodies, if you walk along the platform.



The Sims

Q> I'm playing The Sims and I am having problems making friends in the game so could you please help me out?

Sera Walling

A> Well, much like in real life, friends in some ways are a bit of a waste of time. You don't actually need them so long as your family is talking to you. But if you want to, then make sure you greet everyone as they come to

visit you. Talk to people on the phone. Keep your hygiene levels high and ensure that you are not initiating sexual contact with people before your friendship is high enough. Wait until it's 40 or more before you do or you'll upset the delicate little sims.

Grim Fandango

Q> I am stuck on Year 2 of Grim Fandango. I am in the lift,

with the forklift, and have positioned it against the right hand gap in the wall. But when I push the button and climb onto the forklift, Manny takes so long starting the thing up, I miss the secret level!

All my friends can't understand it, please help!

Nightmare Wind

A> Pretty much, there is no easy way to do this. Just follow these instructions and keep practicing, because it's the only way to do it.

Once you're in the basement, hop on the forklift and drive it into the elevator. Once you're in, position the forklift so it's lined up with the right-hand part of the elevator door. Press the elevator button, then quickly get in the forklift and drive it forward through the hole in the door. As you pass by the "hidden" floor, push forward so the forklift will block the elevator from moving up. Get off, walk to the other side of the forklift and hit the lever, raising the fork.

Half-Life

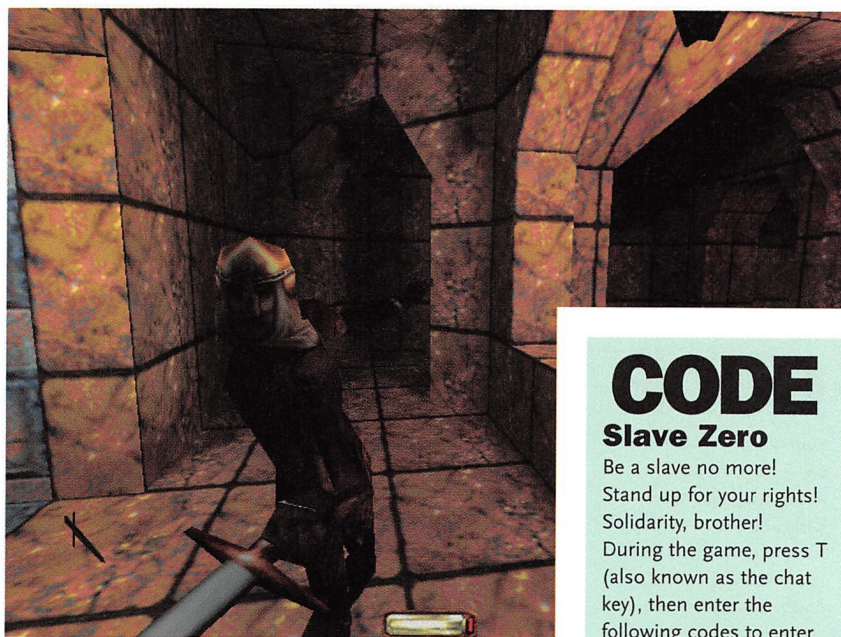
Q> Guys, help! I'm fighting something called Gonarch on the alien homeworld in Half-Life and I'm having a lot of trouble defeating it.

Can you please help me?

Feeman

A> Use your most powerful weapon on her egg sac which is hanging below her. Stand your distance when attacking her for she will swipe you or fire acid at you as well as laying baby Headcrabs. The RPG is a good choice to use in this big open space. After you have dealt some damage to Gonarch she will run over to the cave and break through the mesh and run down the cave. Don't follow her yet instead grab the ammo lying around the dead Scientist then use the healing pool on the floating platform to your side then go after this hideous Freudian monster.

In the next chamber keep attacking the sac. Again, she'll run, but keep the fire power on. Jump over to the thin ledge then down into the tunnel. Follow Gonarch and when you fall into the chamber try and hit the mesh before you hit the ground to avoid taking damage. Grab the ammo cache next to the dead scientist and use the EGON to shoot the sac. Try and keep moving to avoid the baby Headcrabs. After a little damage Gonarch will drop down into the



chamber. Now you have her where you want her. Pour on the firepower until she expires. Job well done.

Thief Gold

Q> O wise Oracle, My thieving skills are lacking, and I cant seem to find Ruben's house in the mission Thief's guild. Any help that you could give would be rewarded with gold and women.

Haggis

A> Women! If you think I had skills with women I'd be talking

to you? As for Thief: The Guild's hideaway is in the basement beneath the casino "Overlord's Fancy," which operates under a nearby restaurant.

Oh, and it's thieves. Grammar.

SimCity 3000

Q> Hi. In Sim City 3000 Whenever I lay new houses people build on them but about two weeks later they abandon them. They have everything they need (Water and Electricity) but they still leave their home. Is there any way I can make them stay? Thanks, Peter McIntosh

A> Your Residential Zones need to be near some Commercial Zones and relatively close to some Industrial Zones. They also need access to Schools, Hospitals, Police and Fire Protection and at least one or two recreational facilities. Make sure they have enough power and have enough water access. To achieve the high land value place Museums and Libraries to help keep your adult Sims educated. There could be many other reasons, but make sure that you have got these ones sorted out first.

CODE

Slave Zero

Be a slave no more! Stand up for your rights! Solidarity, brother! During the game, press T (also known as the chat key), then enter the following codes to enter the heathen underworld of the shameless cheater.

/GOODIES - upgrades weapons

/I WIN - win current mission

/BIG ASS - exits game

/ONASS - throws player backwards

/OUCH - player gets hurt

/WILCOX - player shakes

/3PRONG - toggles shadows on/off

/WEEZIE - enemies ignore player

Nox

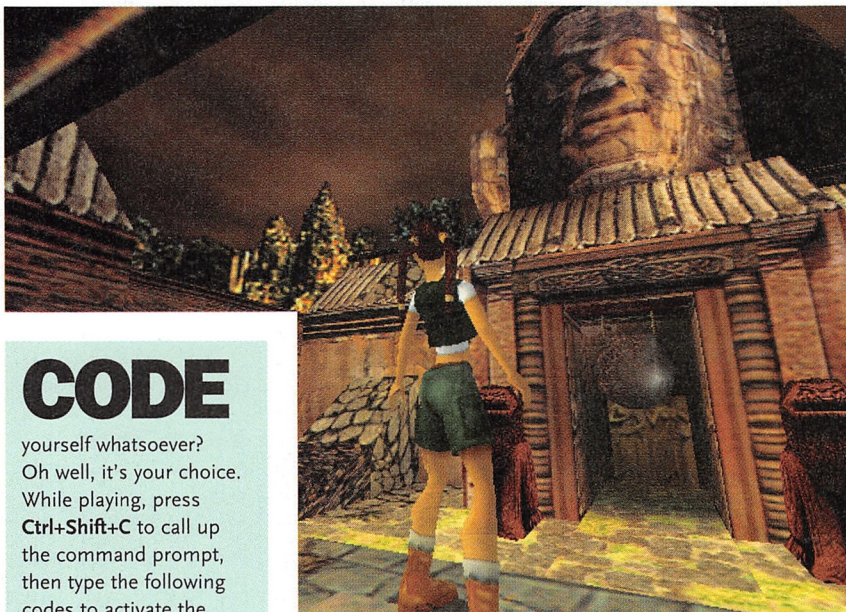
Fed up with taking too many hard nox (*Hard nox!* Geddit? - Ed) in Westwood's isometrically-inclined roleplaying action thang? Have we got a cheat for you, you scumsucking reprobate. Hit F1 and type "racoiaws" to conjure the cheat mode, then try these codes:

"**cheat level #**" - sets your level to the number you type instead of the #
"set god" - god mode
"help cheat" - the complete cheat list

The Sims

Hmm, so not only are you so useless at your real life that you feel it necessary to cheat it by having a virtual life, but now you want to cheat in your virtual life, too? Have you no respect for





CODE

yourself whatsoever?
Oh well, it's your choice.
While playing, press **Ctrl+Shift+C** to call up the command prompt, then type the following codes to activate the corresponding cheats:

- Klapaucius** - 1,000 Simoleons
- lot_size #** - changes lot size to any number
- autonomy #** - changes Sims' IQ and ability to think freely (enter a number from 1 to 100)
- set_hour #** - changes time of day in a 24-hour clock (enter a number from 1 to 24)
- set_speed #** - changes game speed (enter a number from -1,000 to 1,000)
- grow_grass #** - changes rate of grass growth (enter a number from 1 to 150)
- edit_char** - opens Create-a-Character screen
- water_tool** - Sim home becomes an island surrounded by water
- map_edit on/off** - toggles Map Editor
- route_balloons on/off** - toggles tutorial balloons
- interests** - displays personality and interests of Sims
- sweep on/off** - toggles game ticks
- tile_info on/off** - toggles tile information
- draw_all_frames on/off** - toggles drawing of all frames
- log_mask** - sets event logging mask
- history** - dumps family history file
- !** - repeats last cheat
- ;** - separates multiple cheat commands

Tomb Raider 4

Q> Hey, I'm playing Tomb Raider 4 and I'm having troubles with the Temple of Horus levels. There are all these jugs and vases of water and I really don't know what to do with them. Please help me Oracle.

Also, is there really a Nude Raider secret easter egg in the game? My cousin said there is, but he won't tell me how to get into it.

Mad Cereal Killa!

A> Cereal...? Oh dear. Firstly: No. Nude. Raider. Please. Never. Ask. Again. You are a spotty little man. But, to continue with your answer, and only because I am pleased that you have progressed in this difficult game, pick up the five litre water skin. Combine it with the three litre skin and pour the five litres into the vase. If you get it wrong, the very nasty monster will come and eat you. You'll note that near the water fountain there are also several markings on the wall telling you all the correct levels of the vases.

Planescape: Torment

Q> Hi, I really really love playing Planescape: Torment but I

am completely stuck at the bit where you have to kill your doubles and open up the Bronze Sphere. If I try to absorb either of them, then I get sucked in and I die. If I try to fight them, I die as well.

Please help me! I'm desperate to finish this game.

Johnson B5

A> Ah, indeed. Even the Oracle was briefly confounded by this particular little puzzle within the game, but some careful reflection allowed me to solve the game momentarily. But of course, you are not me and so need some help.



Don't fight them. They are like you but are probably far tougher. Talk to the evil incarnation. Pump him for every bit of information. Should get some XP out of him. Force him to merge with you by having a wisdom of 20+. Boost this by using the worms Fhjull gave you in the Outlands. To gain the insane Incarnation, one must simply speak to him in the dead language of UYO from the ashes of the linguist Finam in the Clerk's Ward. If you then speak to your first self, the original one, he'll merge easily enough, but you'd best ask him about your true name first. You may have to start from a much earlier game and get your wisdom scores up.

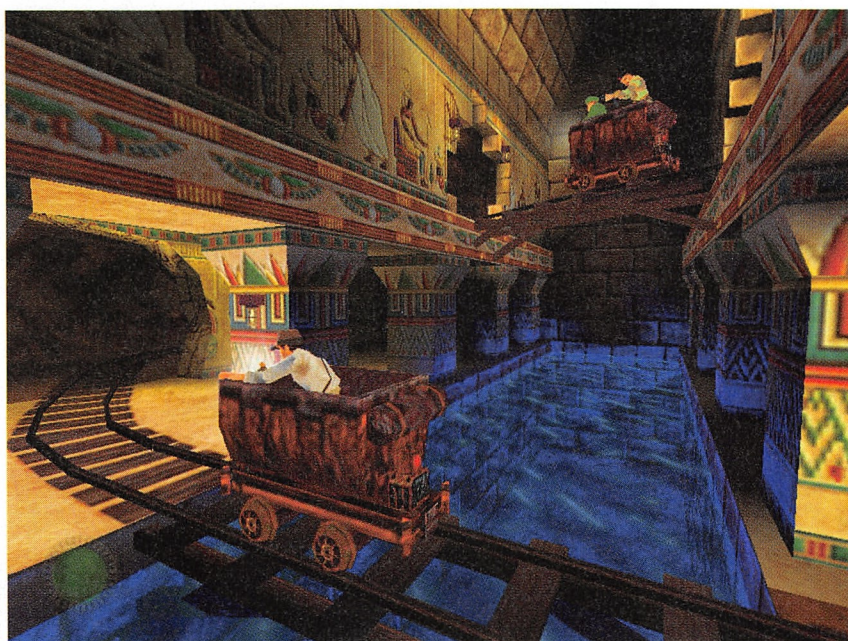
Indiana Jones and The Infernal Machine

Q> Your wisdom is very cool. Do you know if there is any secret levels for Indiana Jones and the Infernal Crusade? I read that there was a lot, but I can't find them.

Damen

A> Infernal Machine, perhaps? Illiterate, perhaps?

As far as I am aware there is only one hidden area in Infernal Machine, and that is Back To Peru. Apparently, once you have several thousand dollars and have completed the game, you can purchase a secret map that will open the level up to you. Be warned though, this level is supposedly ferociously difficult.



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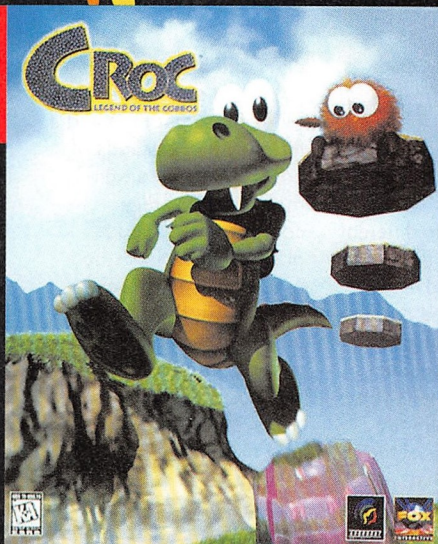
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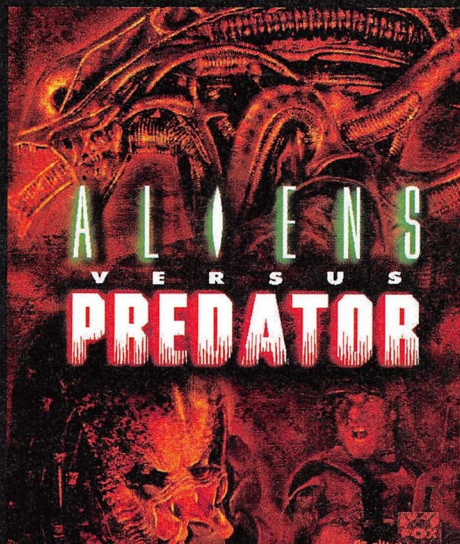
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Age of Empires II

WEB RESOURCES

TIM BEST SEEKS CORONATION ON THE NET



Age of Empires II: Age of Kings is a game packing enough options so that players aren't likely to ever explore them all. But it's a game that is interesting enough for people all over the world to try. Like any game that becomes a phenomenon, beginners will leap right into the game and be off and playing. They'll take out the computer on "easy" in no time and think they're pretty good. Then they'll try it on a hard level of difficulty and get a major shock. They

will find themselves overrun before they can sew up a white flag. Age of Kings is actually hard when it is set to "hard" (when you face a decent opponent) but if you do your homework it can all be turned around.

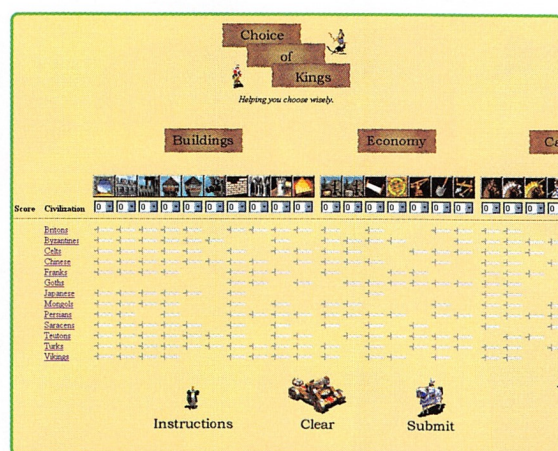
We like Bruce Shelley

Most Age of Kings sites have background information on the game, some info on the guy you can play and all that stuff that Ensemble Studios like to put out and is fairly easy to get. Where Planet Age of Empires (www.planetageofempires.com/aok/) excels is in its analysis of all this information.

Clicking on the "technology" button will give you a list of all of the buildings and techs that they produce, as well as giving them a rating, from one to ten, with

explanation.

Looking up the different civilisations won't just give you strengths and weaknesses pulled out of a manual, but it will give an analysis of the usefulness of each ability. It tells you how popular an empire is online, how many of the top players use that civilisation, rates their tech tree and so on. This approach really gives you an idea how each race



Choice of Kings finds which race is right for you. It's just like a dating service really.

plays and brings the published stats to life.

Also, a great FAQ and a forum with thousands of posts, including a well-moderated strategy section, will introduce players to new ideas no matter their skill level.

In short, this site gets a big two thumbs up for making information that would take casual players many, many months of play to figure out and making it easy to understand and access. Of course, the site also has all of the other goodies one would expect like new

scenarios and campaigns, a news section, game art, and a handy links page that rates what else is out there for your convenience.

You know why?

If, even after the sage words (ratings) of the Planet site, you still have doubts to your perfect match, Choice of Kings (www.sweetapp.com/cgi-bin/choiceofkings) is a neat little program designed to tell you which civilisation is most up your alley.

It works by having a list of the techs, which you grade in importance

Zone and Wireplay

www.zone.com.au
www.wireplay.com.au

These are your two main choices for being able to get online multiplayer games of AoK whenever you have the craving. The Zone is the Microsoft games network in the US and Wireplay is Telstra's game service. The Zone usually has thousands of AoK players on at around the clock, but having the servers in the US means you might cop nasty lag and you are bound to cop Americans (not that's there anything wrong with that).

Wireplay is much closer but costs \$20 per month, which isn't too bad. Check out the sites and see what you like - or keep your eye out for local servers.



from zero to nine. The empires best matching your technological needs are calculated and listed in order.

At the bottom of the page, each civilisation's special bonuses are also shown with a reminder that techs aren't everything and that the bonuses might help you decide between the 83% match and the 82%.

It's kind of fun to try, though unfortunately you have to know which techs fire your trebuchet, so it only works for people who have played the game a bit (or have keenly studied the tech section at Planet Age of Empires).

It's because he's...

If you are after a bit more substance and strategy then this site might be more your cup of tea. When I first hit Mr Fixit Online



(www.mrfixitonline.com) it didn't do much for me. After a little poking around I realised that it was a gem in the rough. The site is run by a bunch of the top Age of Kings players and there is a lot of information for advanced players as well as up to date info on the US tournament scene.

MFO has suggestions for game rules as well as articles which get right into the nitty gritty of exact specifications of certain units. Do you want to know how long it takes for Monks to start converting a unit once they spot it (no faster than between 5 and 5.25 seconds) or the percentage chance of a conversion? Perhaps you want to see a mathematical proof that Cho Ko Nu don't work the way they are written up in the manual involving such equations as $T = HP / (R * (AT - PA))$.

I'm just using these examples of how hardcore these guys are. A lot of the information is a lot more useful and accessible to the "average" advanced player. MOF is full of strategies and discussions on their more devious and tricky uses.

The MOF crew even run clinics which involve taking a supplicant's recorded

About.com

<http://computerstratgames.about.com/games/compstratgames/library/bgguides.htm>

This URL might give you cramps typing, but it is a good place to start for beginners. It takes you through the basics of what you should do in each age to get you off to a flying start. It is very straightforward and written in a way that you don't have to be all that familiar with the game to understand. If you don't know enough to know what you don't know swing by here first, play a little oak and then hit the other sites.



game and dissecting and then analysing it for any discernible weaknesses. If you can take the criticism, it's an interesting read and gives you an idea what not to do (instead of just the other side of the coin).

Really cuddly!

Advanced players, or just the creative types, might not be satisfied merely playing the game - they might want to start expanding it as well. This is especially true in games which pack an editor out of the box like AoK. Since this editor comes without the benefit of any documentation, would-be game designers might want to take a look at Campaign Creations (www.campaigncreations.com/)



Mon, Mar 27, 2000

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Strategy Guides

Age of Empires II

The Civilizations
 Knowing your civilization's strengths and weaknesses will give you an advantage over your competition.

The Maps
 Strategies to help you take advantage of the lay of the land.



ageofkings/) for advice and tricks of the trade.

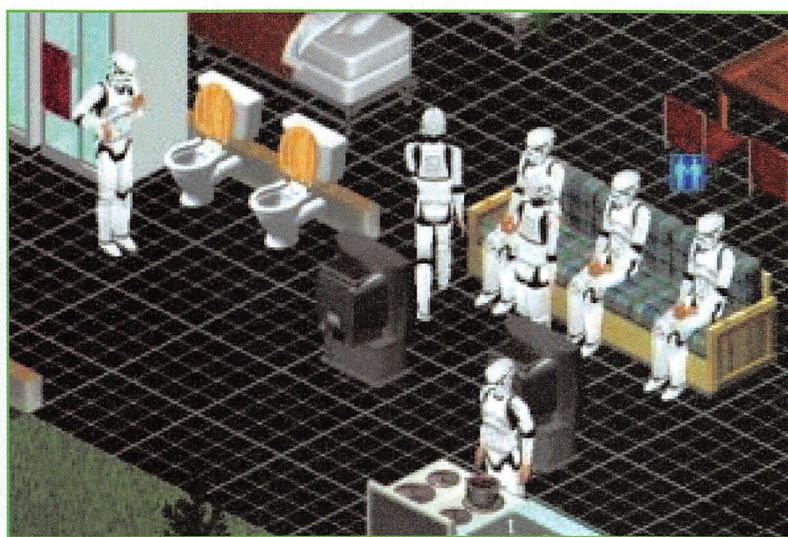
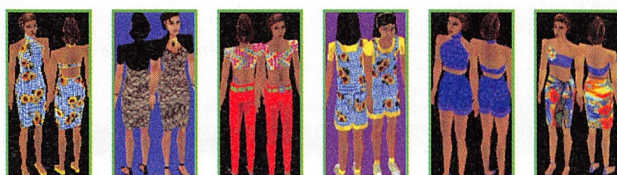
There are techniques for beginners just to fill in some gaps left by the lack of documentation as well as more advanced stuff like how to replace one of Ensemble's supplied campaigns with one of your own. This allows the campaign designer to use all of the bells and whistles of the Ensemble's campaigns including the specy intros and debriefings complete with sound and vision. Basically, if you want to put on the same scale production as the Joan of Arc or Genghis Khan campaign this it for you (if you are willing to dive in and get your hands dirty). ■

The Sims

WEB RESOURCES



DAN ZIFFER MOVES IN WITH THE STORMTROOPERS

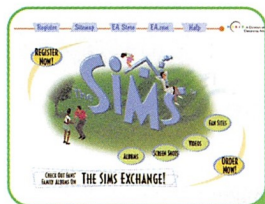


The Sims! Has there ever been a game which allows you to start life afresh as much as this intriguing Maxis title? The open architecture of the game has enabled people to easily create fresh, exciting and often downright kooky add-ons. From new floors to new windows, new skins to new heads and new clothes to no clothes, there is a big new world for you and your Sim to explore.

THE SIMS

www.thesims.com

■ The original home of The Sims and one of the most comprehensive sites



around. TheSims.com is a cross between a warehouse and a drop-in centre. You can pick up some new skins, or download one of the 'comic books' that players have constructed. You can download whole families and houses, or check out the latest storyboards and Sim news. Many of the features of the site (comics, videos, albums, houses etc) are

explained and ranked - in true Sims style. This saves a lot of wading through unfunny clips. Before you leave, be sure to pick up some soccer balls and a BBQ for your Sims. Luckily, they come installed with the code for your Sims to play with them. (Playing with fire not recommended.)



MALL OF THE SIMS

www.mallofthesims.com/

■ Organised and stocked far better than many major e-commerce sites, Mall Of The Sims has every possible Sims product for you to buy. With separate shops on different levels of the mall, there is something for every home-maker. Check out the enthusiastic guys at Carpet World! "Here at Carpet

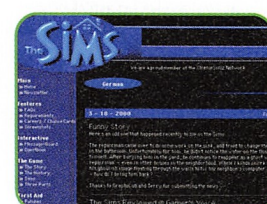
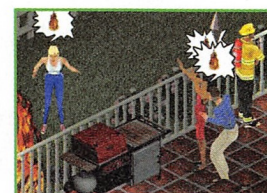


World, we pride ourselves on offering you the finest in hand woven, custom milled, high quality carpet and floor-coverings. With our threads under your sims' feet, they're sure to be as successful in simulated life as you can possibly help them be!" And don't worry about busting your credit limit, because everything at the Mall of the Sims is absolutely 100% free.

SIMS X-TREME

thesims.xtremesimz.com/

■ Sims X-Treme, as well as being one well-stocked



Sims site, is also home to sites for many of the other popular sim games. More of a news site and bulletin board than a super-mall, it has some unusual entries. Check out this quirky sim-happening...

"The repairman came over to do some work on the sink, and tried to change the burnt-out bulb in the bathroom.



Unfortunately for him, he didn't notice the water on the floor and fried himself. After burying him in the yard, he continues to reappear as a ghost when you 'call repairman' - even in other houses in the neighborhood". Fortunately, Sims X-Treme also has tips on how to avoid killing your Sims. And if you want to see even more of your Sims, you can download the nude patch here.



PETER'S PLACE
www.borg.com/%7EEnaughton/sims.htm

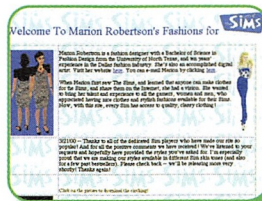
■ A good place to go if you're still tossing up

whether to buy the Sims, Peter's Place will also appeal to hardcore fans of the Sims. A long-time Sim fanatic, Peter moderates the official Maxis email discussion list - exclusively for The Sims - and has had a lot of celebrity posting on the boards. Maxis employees like Sean Baity, Patrick Buechner, Luc Barthelet and even Will Wright himself have posted on the SimWatch board. That said, Peter's other great love is train-spotting - no, not the movie - and some of the detail can be a little overwhelming.

MARION ROBERTSON'S FASHIONS

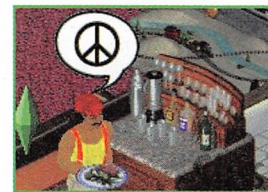
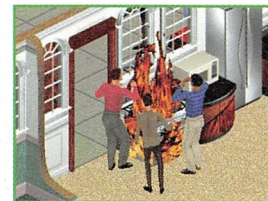
www.borg.com/%7EEnaughton/sims.htm

■ For those who like their virtual friends to look good, look no further than



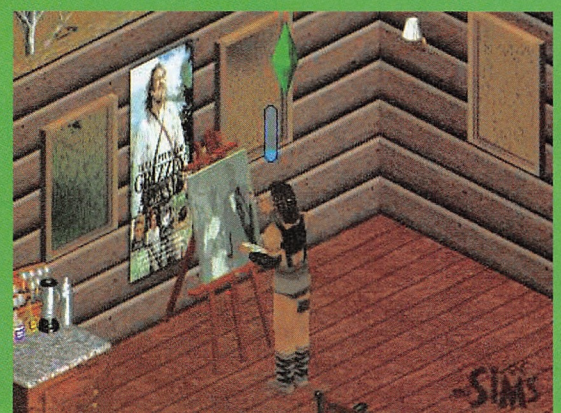
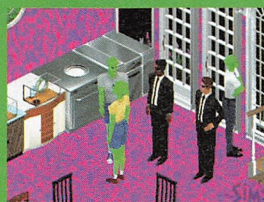
Marion Robertson's Fashions. Apparently, Marion is a fashion designer with ten years' experience in the Dallas fashion industry, and a Bachelor of Science in

Fashion Design from the University of North Texas. The style of Texas is definitely evident in her clothing, which consists primarily of summer outfits. While it is described as quality, classy clothing, it seems to lack the simple sophistication of Maxis' designs. But then again, it's nice to have more than three outfits!



The Simmys

Maxis recently held a story telling contest on its official Sims site. These shots are two of the winning entries.



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NOX Playguide

TIMOTHY C. BEST OWNS A POINTY HAT WITH STARS ON IT

Nox is not your average, garden variety RPG. Its full motion offence, almost shooter tactics and fast twitch requirements might throw a few roleplayers. On the other hand, the puzzle element is fairly minimal, serving just to break up the adrenaline. What this adds up to is a hints and strategy guide that focuses on the skills you need to battle your way to Hecubah.

There are plenty of spells, weapons, tricks and traps you can use to aid your quest. What follows should help you pick up your game and get you thinking in the right direction.

There are three separate classes in Nox and each has a slightly different quest and vastly

different strengths, weaknesses and modes of play. Even so there is some advice which is good across the board:

- Get used to the controls. Nox has an interesting system where the further away from your character (Jack) you click and hold, the faster he moves in that direction. What this means is that you have to get used to constantly pointing past the area you want to run to and if you want to do sudden stops or direction changes it means swinging that mouse in wide arcs around Jack.

- Practice running, jumping, dodging and weaving. Hit and run tactics will save your skin time and time again, no matter your class. Not becoming a pincushion is

definitely the better part of valour.

- Like any action game, learn the quick keys, you'll feel and play better.

The Warrior

Strong, fast and tough, the Warrior is the master of weaponry, armour and shields. His most underrated ability is his skill with the shield. This lets him block hand-to-hand weapons, arrows and even incoming spells, all by just facing the opponent and not moving.

Being able to stand still and not take damage gives Warriors the luxury of time to properly line up attacks, making his ranged weapons and special skills even more deadly. Even just the tactic of blocking and countering can allow the Warrior to walk

unscathed through many encounters. Admittedly, some opponents attack too quickly to launch a conventional counter-attack, but that is when the Warrior special skills come to the fore.

Berserker Charge

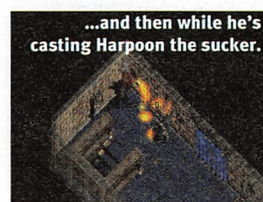
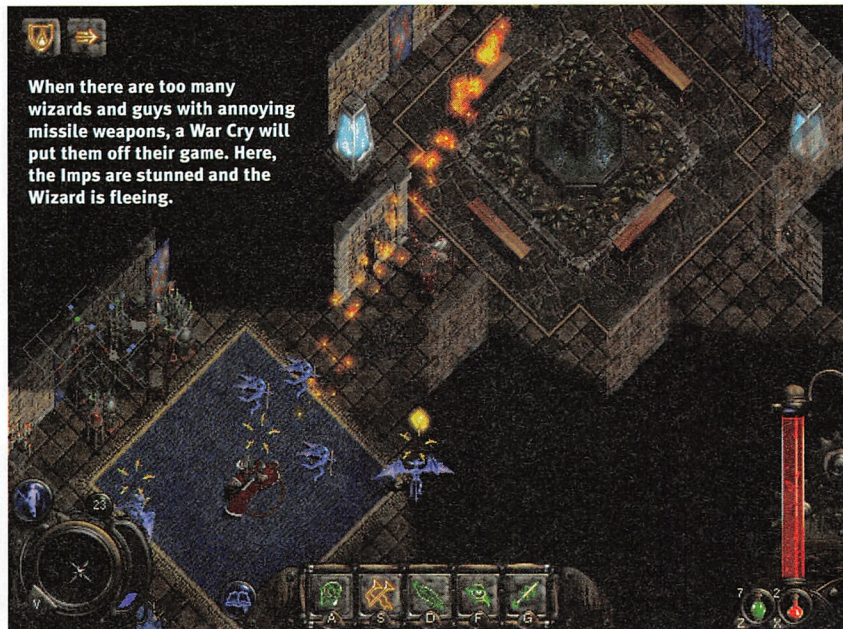
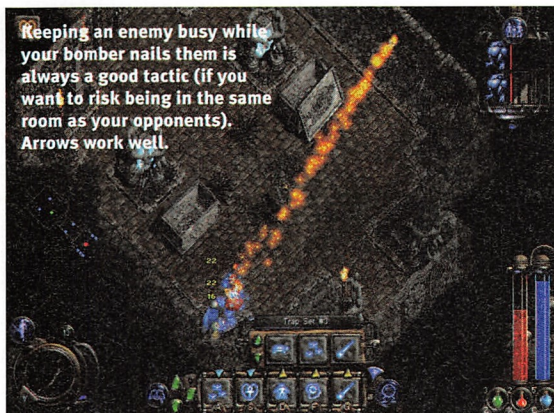
This ability allows the Warrior to deliver a single blow of great strength on

the end of a very rapid charge. It is the first ability you gain in the single player game and is one of the most useful.

Throughout the game, this attack will allow Warriors to deal with all but the most powerful opponents with a single hit. With a shield, Warriors can block attacks until he has his charge perfectly lined up

GENERAL HINTS FOR THE SOLO ADVENTURER

- You can put out fires with water barrels.
- You can flip some switches with ranged weapons.
- Dungeon traps work well on monsters.
- Buy equipment when you find it. You can rarely go back.
- If you can't find a key, search for the door (teleporter) that you have missed.
- Spend your money as you go and repair, repair, repair.
- You can save on weapon wear by opening barrels with your fists.
- Spell casters should save their Mana by using, food, potions and wells of restoration instead of healing spells.



and then let loose. Afterwards, he can go on the defensive again until it recharges. This attack is almost a must against all of the level bosses. Use it often and use it well.

If you don't use it well,

and charge into a wall or a big spell, you'll take damage and be stunned, which is bound to make a bad situation worse.

War Cry

This ability is a great

equaliser in many situations. If there are too many guys, or incoming spells, to use your block and counter tactic then shout, shout, let it all out. War Cry stuns weak enemies, dispels active magic, takes care of incoming Bombers and briefly stops spell casting. This ability is great for foiling those fancy-shamcy magic-wielding classes and is particularly useful in conjunction with the other special abilities.

Harpoon

"Harpoon" yourself a mage from across the screen and drag them right to you for a good pounding. The Harpoon takes a bit of aim, but you can line up from behind your shield or train it at a door you expect foes to chase you through.

There are a couple of really good uses for this power. One is harpooning people on the other side of dangerous zones and dragging them through it: lava, fire, energy beams,

and so on all do the trick.

Against annoying hit and run artists like Wizards, Conjurers and Urchins, a combination of War Cry, Harpoon and then Berserker Charge to finish them is particularly deadly. Of course, after that combo you have to run or block until you recharge all of your offensive special skills, but it's worth it.

The Conjurer

The Conjurer is a potent mix of archery, offensive spells and evil minions.

The Conjurer is the only class able to use the bow or crossbow. In the right hands the bow will

cut enemies to shreds before they know what's hit them. These bows own long passages where dodging is difficult and are a great weapon when Mana is low or Warriors are belting out War Cries.

In the single player game, at low levels, the Pixie Swarm spell is your best friend. It surrounds you with three missiles which shoot out as soon as enemies appear. You should try to have this on at all times.

As soon as you get the Charm spell, use it almost as much as the Pixies. Once you have a creature's beast scroll, any creature of that type is easy pickings. Keep in mind ►

YE OLDE FRAGFESTS

Nox is a fast game, paced more like a shooter than an RPG, especially when it comes to multiplayer games where it plays more like Quake than Diablo. Learn the maps, learn the re-spawn points, control the equipment and Mana generating areas, don't camp too long and mix up your tactics. Since there are simple counters to most of the attacks, devious players will make you pay for being predictable.

Since Nox uses a direct line-of-sight system, smart players can take advantage of limited arcs of visibility. Learn to read the areas of the map that are hard for your enemies to see into. Hide in the corners of deep rooms, attack out of windows (your foes will have to get up close to attack back), duck through doors to avoid seeking attacks, make invisible Wizards use the doors and so on. It does take a little thought and planning but that's what it takes to be the best.

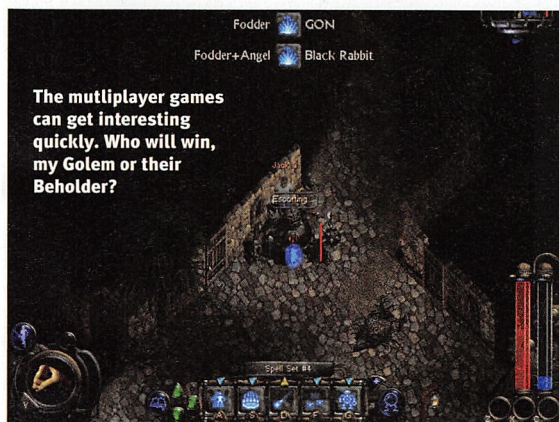
Something to consider when multiplayering on the net is that Warriors need to line up most of their attacks quite precisely. The Chackrum is their only seeking weapon. What this means is that if you hope to use a Warrior online you had better have a low ping connection, otherwise Wizards and Conjurers fair much better with their seeking spells, hench-creatures and devious traps.



In multiplayer games, even after my death, my trusty Mechanical Golem goes on when he's set to hunt. Make them pay, all of them!



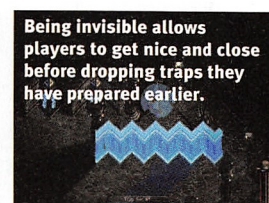
The middle of mana pylons is always a good place for finding traps.



The mutliplayer games can get interesting quickly. Who will win, my Golem or their Beholder?



The "Observer Mode" allows players to check out the competition and for newbies to pick up some of the tricks of the trade.



Being invisible allows players to get nice and close before dropping traps they have prepared earlier.



After that you can just sit back and wait for the unsuspecting.

HEALING

Warriors don't get to cast spells to heal themselves, so healing paraphernalia is a good idea. It should also be noted that since you can only carry ten of each type of healing object, you should probably use the item you have the most of first (unless you are in combat, when you should use whatever is hooked up to the quick-key "x"). Finally, stay on the look out for Vampiric Weapons as they let a Warrior heal himself by dealing out damage.



If you are facing the right way a shield can deflect a lot of punishment. They keep on knocking but they can't get in.

them are great just for shock value in multiplayer, like the huge Mechanical Golem or fireball-spewing Ember Demons. Summoning is handy when there's nothing around to charm, when a specialist creature is called for or when Warriors keep disarming your Bombers. Try all of the Summoned creatures, most of the nastier beasts will find a place in your line up. Don't bother with the weenies.

Bomber tactics

At high levels or in multiplayer games a Conjurer can be deadly with Bombers. He can create these Kamikaze creatures which release up to three spell effects, in the chosen order when they strike. A simple combination is Stun and Fist of Vengeance, and then there is the more paranoid version with Slow thrown in first. Then there's Stun, Toxic Cloud and Poison, hopefully they'll go down before they

can even think of grabbing that Cure Poison potion. The combinations are endless and should be tailored to keep your foes on their toes.

You might like to hide Bombers just behind doors or behind pillars for as a nasty surprise or to cover their charge with arrows or Pixies to keep foes off balance while they deliver their payload.

Something to consider is that there is a limit to the number of some spell effects, like the Pixies. The max number of the little guys is based on your level, so don't have all of your bombers charged with Pixie Swarm - if one or three of them go off at once there will still only be the same number of Pixies appearing (they must be Union or something).

The Wizard

Many would consider the fully-powered Wizard the most dangerous and flexible class when properly used. In sheer

sneakiness they are hard to match.

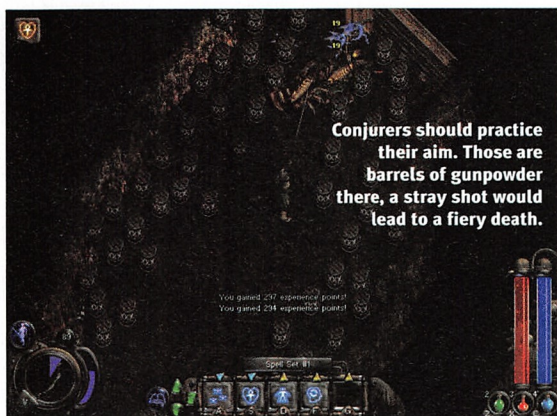
Unfortunately, in the single player game, Wizards are far from fully powered. At low levels Wizards players will find that they will rely heavily on Missile of Magic. This spell is a seeker and is great for firing on the run. At higher levels the use of Force Field should become habitual and the Lightning spell should be used for creatures too tough for Missiles (of course this means giving yourself a lot of room as you can't move and use Lightning). Using Confusion before the Lightning spell is also a good move, as is using Fireball when you are outnumbered and need to cover your retreat. Wizards fighting more than one guy at a time is usually a bad move, especially if they have any range.

As soon as Invisibility makes an appearance, stealth replaces foot speed. Invisibility allows the Wizard to pick his fights and get in the best

► that charming a beast costs a third the mana of a single Pixie Swarm or even Lesser Heal spell. In single player, try to make sure you always have a full complement of charmed beasts. In the beginning, Imps are really handy even though they are pretty

fragile and need to be watched. Considering relative mana costs only heal charmed creatures if you are in a mana rich area.

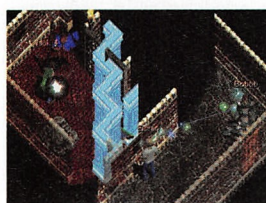
After Charm there comes Summon. There is a wide variety of beasts you can conjure; many of



Conjurers should practice their aim. Those are barrels of gunpowder there, a stray shot would lead to a fiery death.

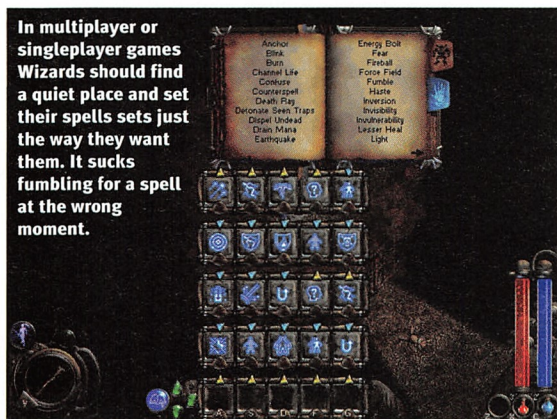


Conjurer Charming: a Giant Scorpion can protect fragile Imps.



position to launch his deadliest spells or to place traps. Remember that

anything faster than a walk will be heard and give the game away.



In multiplayer or singleplayer games Wizards should find a quiet place and set their spells sets just the way they want them. It sucks fumbling for a spell at the wrong moment.

MANA ABUSE

Both Wizards and Conjurers should make the most of the mana reserves they find. These recharge so there is no reason why you shouldn't stock up on defensive spell effects and healing before heading out every time. Of course, in multiplayer games, camping in one spot for too long is never good, but take what time you can. In the single player game, you shouldn't back track too much as the game is well stocked with mana for your abuse.

If you are a Conjurer, charge up with your favourite protection spells (Fire, Shock, Poison etc), Infravision and finally break loose the Pixies. Wizards should arm up with Force Field, protection spells and they might want to mark some points for teleportation when things get hairy.



The Force Field spell means that no single attack can kill you, but that doesn't mean you have to wait around for the giant fist with your name on it. Keep moving.

Traps

Laying traps is a trademark of these sneaky masters of magic. These invisible pressies can cause all manner of headaches when they are well thought out. Obliteration is one spell which is great in a trap. If you just cast it, say goodnight, everything blows up in the area of effect, yourself included. In a trap however, it whoops major behind. Add Slow and Confusion and you have a nasty mix, where characters can guess what is coming but can't escape.

Fumble, Slow and Confusion is also a handy way of getting a nice weapon or staff out of the hands of your enemy before you light them up with an offensive onslaught.

There are many tactics that can be used with traps. In multiplay you want them to get set off, so place them near Mana reserves or equipment piles where people are likely to go. If those lucky bastards keep missing your traps you can

always use Detonate Seen Traps to manually take care of business.

In single or multiplayer games placing traps while invisible is always a great move. Once they are in place, activate your enemies with some Missiles of Magic and then watch them go boom.

You can also do things like set your traps, use Wall and then wait for someone to come close enough for you to swap places with - boom, they land on the trap that was at your feet and are walled in.

Note, that the number of some spell effects like Missiles of Magic is limited in the same way as Pixie Swarm (that is by level), so if you expect chain detonation of traps only put these spells in one of them.

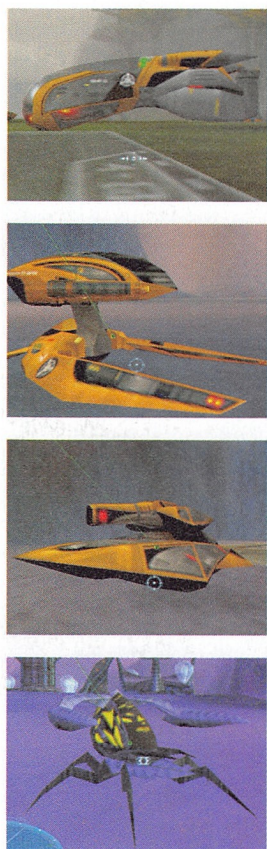
Set those Spells

Wizards should rearrange their Spell Sets as soon as they get more than five spells. Set one should be offensive and have your favourite blasting

spells including Lightning, Missiles of Magic, and so on, but it should also have Blink or Teleport (it's always really embarrassing getting run to ground by overly fit Warriors).

The second set should have your defensive spells like Force Field, Invisibility, the protection spells and so on, so that you can power up quickly when you are near a Mana source. You might also like to make a Wizard's duel set including Drain Mana, Inversion, Swap Location and an offensive spell or two. Drain Mana is a great opening gambit against other mages, especially if they are the shoot-first-ask-questions-later type.

If Warriors keep busting your hump, a well-timed Wall spell will stop their Berserker Charge and can be pretty funny to watch. Lightning is always good as well against these guys, as it ignores a Warrior's shield and actually does more damage to oafs in metal armour. ■



BATTLEZONE II Playguide

JOHN DEWHURST GUIDES YOU THROUGH THE UNITS YOU NEED TO WIN!

The No.1 Strategy

RTS = Resources To Steal!

One important thing to remember in Battlezone II is that the war ends on the battlefield, but is won at the resource pool. To get the upper hand, you need to gain and maintain control of as much of the bio-metal on the map as you can. In practise, this means having as many scavengers in the field as possible, to either draw from a resource pool or to "scavenge" the fallen on the battlefield. Practically the first thing you should do is build a couple of scavengers to go out and start accumulating bio-metal.

Your accumulation of scrap is not limitless. This means that you should be building ALL the time

without exception. NEVER should you be sitting with your maximum amount of scrap doing nothing. This is as much a waste as losing a scrap pool to your enemy. The queuing option for production is an easy way to keep things building for longer before your attention is required.

The flipside is that you need to PROTECT your scavengers as they go out to collect for your empire. Have a reasonable number of units protect your mining operations, especially early in the game. Upgrade your defences as necessary. Until you're well and truly set for units and structures, draw a line in the sand and don't let anyone step over it! Later on, when you've amassed your forces and are

perhaps readying for a final assault, it's not as important. When you have expansive resource operations you are able to produce more quickly the structures of use (factory, armoury, kiln, etc.) and more units.

This is probably the most important part of your strategy - whatever else you do, fight tooth and nail for bio-metal!

Generals don't lead the army...

It's not a socialist ideal, but in practise a general stays back in the bunker with a good cup of tea, he doesn't race to the frontline of battle. As much as you can, be selective about which battles you get involved in personally. Remember,

you need to keep an eye on the bigger picture of the war and if you're caught up fighting off some Sentries, there could be the army from hell creeping up your back without you even knowing it!

If your forces are well assembled and being deployed effectively, you are actually freed up to do more important things, like directing the battle, building or attacking a particular target. Be

careful, stay out of the frontline and you'll avoid having to rush around LOOKING for a vehicle to commandeer.

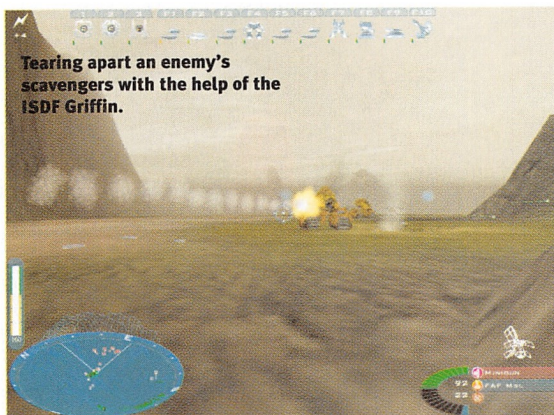
...But they need to know how to fight.

You will undoubtedly see some close quarters action. This is where your skills from Quake or Unreal come in. You need to keep moving - that means strafing, moving forwards and back, etc.

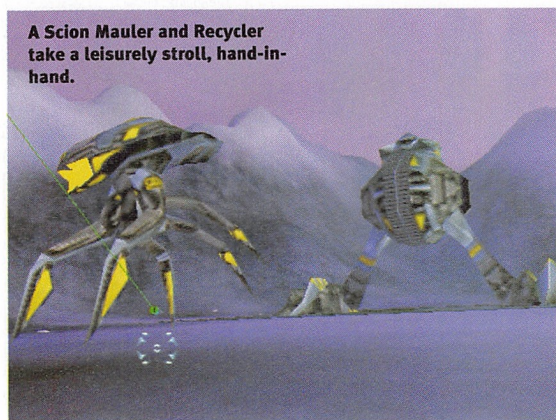
ALL I WANT'S A LITTLE SERVICE...

In any assault party, it's a great idea to have a service truck (or Scion healer) at arm's length to give those quick repairs that you will inevitably need. Remember to keep them a little behind your party as they're sitting ducks for the enemy!

Bear in mind to check often that your service truck hasn't been left behind. Being tracked, the little beggars can easily get bogged down in terrain.



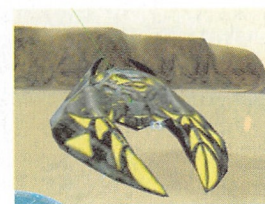
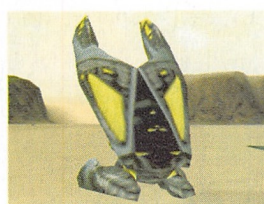
Tearing apart an enemy's scavengers with the help of the ISDF Griffin.



A Scion Mauler and Recycler take a leisurely stroll, hand-in-hand.



A scavenger - that really should be scavenging right now...



Don't forget that you can jump in your craft, another way to avoid some fire from your enemies.

Be selective about what weapons you use for your enemies - you obviously don't want to use mortars on a target that's close and in motion! Above all, if you can possibly avoid close action, do so. That is, unless you got a bug in your ear and need to destroy something...

Basic fighting tactics are no different from any other FPS, with a few amendments. If you come across some defenses like the Guardians or other turrets, etc., use your mortars and attack from a distance. Don't hesitate to send in your troops ahead of yourself when making an attack.

Battlezone II is a challenge because there's SO MUCH to do. Try to get an intimate knowledge of everything in the game, so that you can respond quickly to any situation. Plan carefully, stay calm and in no time you'll be

cleaning up against the single player missions and multiplayer enemies alike.

The Units

Real Time Strategy titles have always rewarded the creative player. The key to the effective use of forces in RTS games is to know the benefits and limitations of your troops so that you can let your cunning and devious mind run free! Battlezone II has the added consideration of your own involvement as a military unit, so your orders need to be well planned and given quickly.

Here, we'll look at each of the units at your disposal and consider where they fit into your army. We'll also look at planning considerations and basic strategies, so that you'll have a strong place to begin your reign of terror over the universe!

ISDF Forces

The ISDF forces are generally better armoured and slower than corresponding Scion units. This means that as an offensive force, you need to make sure when you DO move, you need to move with authority. Becoming swamped by faster Scions spells instant death...

Rattler Turret

Built by: Recycler

Speed: Slow

Armour: Light

Weapon Hardpoints: Dual guns

Your only option in early game defense, the Rattler is solid enough for this purpose. Once positioned it can't be moved, so place these babies wisely! Not a serious option for later game defence, however.

Thunderbolt Scout

Built by: Recycler

Speed: Fast

Armour: None

TAKE THE A-TERRAIN

When setting up a base, think strategically and make use of the environment for the best protection. Ideally you want to have at least one side of your base against a cliff face - the fewer directions that your enemy can easily approach from, the better. Also think about natural features that will give you an advantage in defense and place your defenses accordingly.

Base defense is as much about placement as firepower and if your base is secure, then all your other jobs of production and attacking are made that much easier.



Weapon Hardpoints: Dual guns, Rocket, Special

This scout is just that - great for patrolling enemy areas, due to its speed. It has a large radar area, so it's good for detecting enemy attacks. It can also

handle itself under fire quite well.

Avenger Missile Scout

Built by: Factory

Speed: Medium

Armour: None



Weapon Hardpoints: Dual rockets, special

With its heavy firepower the Avenger can be more brutal than the Thunderbolt. But due to its lack of speed, it doesn't survive as well as its faster counterpart. A defensive option in your base.

Jackal Mortar Bike

Built by: Factory
Speed: Fast
Armour: None
Weapon Hardpoints: Mortar

This is an odd sort of vehicle, since its only real use is for long range attacks, due to the lack of armour. This makes it ideal for attacking bases. It desperately needs protection by other units, though.

Sabre Tank

Built by: Factory
Speed: Medium
Armour: Light
Weapon Hardpoints:

Cannon, Dual guns, Mortar, Special

A good choice for you and a good vehicle generally, since it's as much an attacker as a defender. It has an excellent variety of weapons and moves well for its rather heavy firepower.

Griffin Rocket Tank

Built by: Factory
Speed: Slow
Armour: Heavy
Weapon Hardpoints: Dual rockets

This amount of rocket fire makes the Griffin a formidable unit. Use it in attacks on enemy bases in combination with your more agile craft. Defensively, it is very effective especially around your base.

Sentinel Assault Tank

Built by: Factory
Speed: Slow
Armour: Heavy
Weapon Hardpoints: Cannon, Dual mortars

The Sentinel is much more an attacking vehicle than the Griffin, due to its variety in weapons. This kind of armour combined with mortars, makes the Sentinel a better option than mortar bikes.

Attila Walker

Built by: Factory
Speed: Slow
Armour: Heavy
Weapon Hardpoints: Dual guns, Dual cannons

The Attila is a good mobile weapons vehicle, although its slow speed is a serious disadvantage when using it for attacking purposes. Effective as a defensive unit, it is less so in attack and thus needs to be coordinated with quicker units.

APC

Built by: Factory
Speed: Medium
Armour: None
Weapon Hardpoints: Soldiers
A transport vehicle for

deploying soldiers to a specific location, the APC offers a useful way to attack a base. The ship itself though will probably be shot down due to its lack of armour. Just hope it's after you drop your men rather than before!

Liberator Bomber

Built by: Factory
Speed: Medium
Armour: none
Weapon Hardpoints: Bomb

The Liberator is very useful for attacks on distant and hard-to-reach targets. Good for attacking Scion power sources or anyone who's dug in like a nasty tick!

Scion Forces

Individual Scions have less armour than ISDF forces (and hence are weaker). This is made up for by strength in numbers and the Scion's unsurpassed speed - use this to your advantage! They can't hit you if they

can't catch you. To balance things up, however, the tougher Scion units are comparatively stronger.

Scout

Built by: Recycler
Speed: Fast
Armour: None
Weapon Hardpoints: Cannon, Shield, Special

Comparable to the ISDF Thunderbolt, except with cannons and a handy shield system. A good early game vehicle, however not very effective later on. Get something better as quick as you can!

Guardian

Built by: Recycler
Speed: Medium
Armour: Light
Weapon Hardpoints: Dual guns

This is the small turret of the Scion force, like the Rattler of the ISDF. This unit has a little more armour than its counterpart but serves the



HOLY SNIPERS!

When you're on foot, i.e. outside a vehicle, you really are so close to death it isn't funny. Generally avoid spending too much time on foot. However, there are some interesting options available to you when you are bipedal.

First off, your pulse rifle is all but useless. If you hope to survive bailing out or your craft being destroyed, you need to get some help quickly. If there's no-one around to give up their ship for you, then you need to get some cover and change to sniper rifle. You're likely to get one or two shots at most, so take your time and try to immobilise a nearby enemy ship.

If a battle is fairly balanced between your forces and your enemies, consider the option of jumping out of your craft for the one-shot-death of the sniper to thin out your enemies' ranks (from safety, of course!). This is obviously dangerous, so do so at your own risk. On the other hand, it can be a way to get rid of a whole bunch of sentries in half the time...

same purpose, namely base defense.

Sentry

Built by: Kiln/Forge

Speed: Fast

Armour: Light

Weapon Hardpoints: Dual guns, Shield, Special

The sentry is more effective than the Scion scout and has a slight hand over the ISDF scout, with its armour and shield. In packs, these units are hard to beat and a good basis for your assaults.

Warrior

Built by: Forge

Speed: Medium/Slow

Armour: Light

Weapon Hardpoints: Cannon, Dual guns, Shield, Special

Use these units like the ISDF tank, although they are a little weaker than the latter. Regardless, the warrior is still effective in assaults on squads of enemies and bases.

Lancer

Built by: Kiln/Forge

Speed: Medium

Armour: Light

Weapon Hardpoints: Rocket, Shield, Special

Use lancers in groups and combination, since they only have the one rocket launcher. They're not very fast either, so they definitely need support. Nonetheless, the Lancer is a useful Scion craft.

Mauler

Built by: Forge

Speed: Medium

Armour: Heavy

Weapon Hardpoints: Dual cannon

The Mauler is a very strong unit due to its speed, armour and dual cannons. It is indispensable in base assaults and gives some balance for the much of the other Scion forces which have only light armour.

Titan

Built by: Forge

Speed: Slow

Armour: Heavy

Weapon Hardpoints: Dual guns, Dual cannons

The Titan is the crown of the Scion forces and is almost unstoppable against all but the toughest ISDF units. Send this baby in and watch your ISDF enemies scurry for cover!

Archer

Built by: Forge

Speed: Slow

Armour: Light

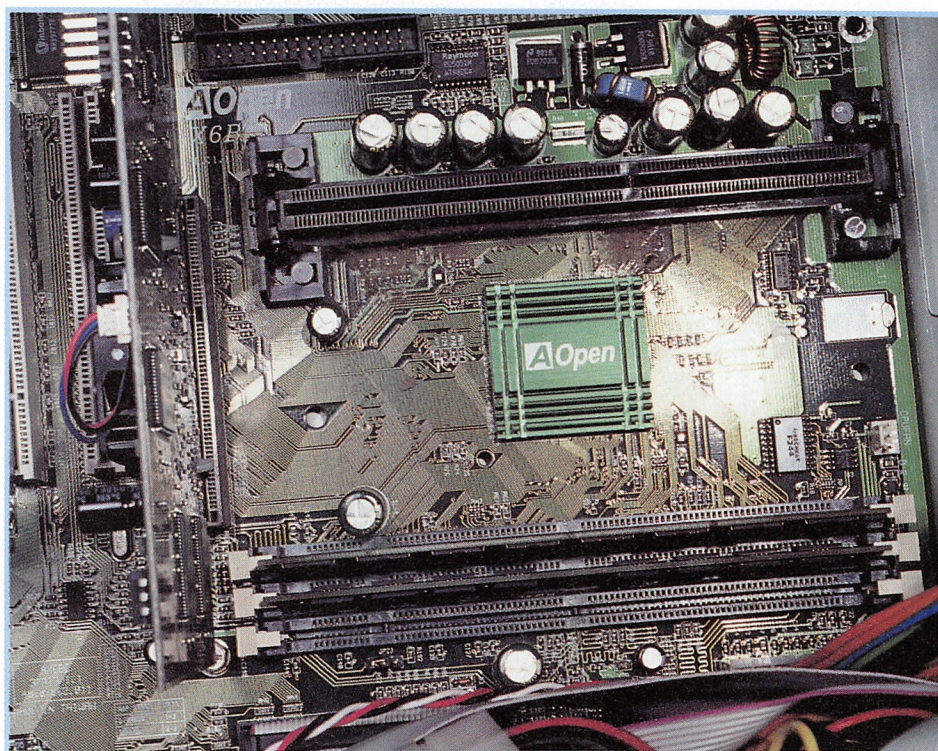
Weapon Hardpoints: Mortar

The Archer is slower than the ISDF air-borne units but at least enjoys some armour. Alone, it is still a prime target, so make sure you have a little support should the Archer start to take fire. Use it for more far-reaching attacks on enemy bases.

HARDWARE HAPPENINGS TECHNEWS

SILICON STATE OF THE ART WITH **HUGH NORTON-SMITH**

POWERPLAY BUYERS GUIDE TO THE MOTHERBOARD



Building and upgrading your computer has become an increasingly popular undertaking amongst the computer savvy. If you're prepared to make the leap, building your own rig is perfect for the budget conscious and the power user alike. With a homemade system, you get exactly the right components, rather than what some b-grade 'Wally from Fairstar' computer dealership has pre-installed. Despite the huge amount of information about the relative merits of computer components, there are very few resources that will show the novice how to install computer hardware. This month, we take a look at installing a computer motherboard. This can be either as part of an upgrade or when building an entirely new system.

The motherboard, also known as a mainboard, is the cornerstone of any new

computer system. It gives all of the computer components a means to communicate with each other. It controls the disk drives, I/O devices and operates the system bus. It may also include a variety of other useful features. These may include temperature monitoring, overclocking tools and SCSI. Your choice of motherboard will also determine your upgrade path: purchase a Socket 370 board and you'll be left to buying Celeron processors. Conversely, if you buy a Slot 1 motherboard, you have far more upgrade options. In all, the motherboard is perhaps the most important part of a new computer. A properly chosen and carefully installed motherboard will ensure years of trouble-free, high performance computing.

GETTING STARTED

Before proceeding with the installation of

your shiny new motherboard, you'll want to have an acceptable workspace. Work in a well-lit and relatively dust-free environment. Above all, try to avoid carpeted areas; the build-up of a static charge in your body can easily fry the innards of sensitive electronic equipment. Ergo, take care to earth yourself frequently. If you're paranoid, you might want to invest in a static dissipation wrist strap.

Next, clear a large workbench (preferably wooden) and get your tools ready. At minimum, you'll need some needle-nose pliers and a Phillips head screwdriver. Try to familiarise yourself with the included manual and the various jumper settings. Hopefully, this will help you avoid any potential conflicts or problems.

After this, you'll want to remove the motherboard from the packaging and anti-static

ATX VS AT MOTHERBOARDS

AT and ATX are industry-wide specifications for motherboards and cases. ATX improves on the legacy AT standard in a variety of ways. Primarily, the whole layout, including the CPU and expansion slots, is rotated by 90 degrees for better cooling and increased room. The end result is that ATX boards are much easier to install; they have a far better mounting mechanism, industry standard connectors and colour-coded cabling.

bag. Place it on a flat surface, and confirm that the product is in good order. Also make sure you have been sold the correct motherboard: check the board for markings or any other identifying features. If everything checks out here, you're ready for the next part.

THE MOTHER OF ALL BOARDS

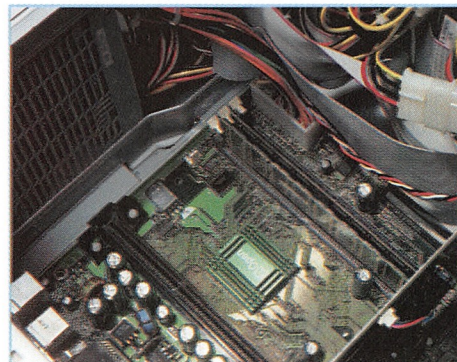
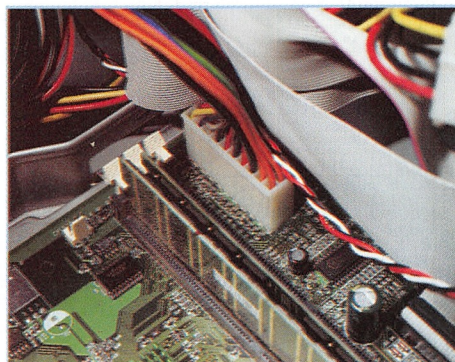
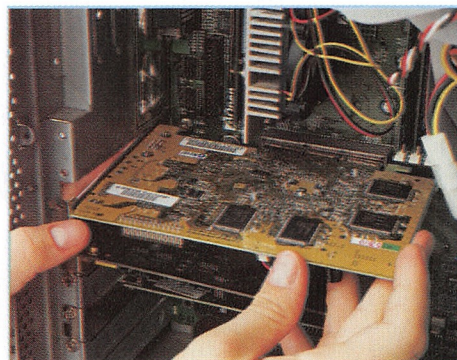
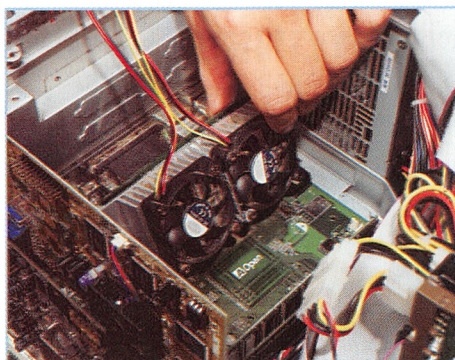
Everything plugs into your motherboard eventually, but it's probably easiest to connect a few items before you insert the motherboard into the case. We usually put small, fiddly items like the CPU and memory in first, as there are no cables to get in the way. Basically, there are two types of CPU currently available: Socket and Slot-based processors. Whereas the Celeron tends to be a socketed CPU, the Intel Pentium III and AMD Athlon use a slot form factor. Inserting a slot-based CPU is a no-brainer. Just push it in firmly, making sure you have the pins lined up correctly. You should hear a reassuring click. When you are inserting a socketed CPU into a motherboard, it's important to know that the CPU can only be inserted one way. A socketed CPU should drop into place, with zero force applied. Don't try and push it, as the connection pins can be easily bent. Finally, pull down the retention mechanism to lock the CPU in place. Voila - and you used to have to pay someone to do that!

Installing memory (DIMM) is a doddle. Like most other PC components, it only fits in one way. Line the DIMM up with the slot, and push it in. As the DIMM slides in, the fasteners should grip onto the edges. When you've pushed it in completely, the small, white fasteners should secure it in place.

MOUNTING

Now to actually putting the motherboard into your case - it's absolutely crucial that you perform this properly. First, line up the motherboard with the case, so you can visualise how it will rest. Now, clear out the inside of the case. Shift any extraneous cables to the side, so that there is a sufficiently large space available for the motherboard to rest.

Your motherboard should come with a small packet of screws, spacers and risers. These are used to mount your motherboard



Clockwise from top left: cooling fans, videocard, DIMMs, more DIMMs (this time in close-up).

to the casing. The main purpose of the risers is to make sure that no part of the motherboard ever touches the metal tray underneath it. Lower your motherboard into the tray, and screw it in place using the available holes in the circuit board. After you've secured the board to the tray, make sure that no part of it could possibly touch the tray unless intense force is applied. By incorrectly placing the spacers and risers, or leaving a loose screw within the assembly, you can inadvertently create an electrical circuit that includes your entire motherboard. The best-case scenario is that your power supply will short out. But if you're especially unlucky you can turn your brand new pride and joy into a large and fairly un-aerodynamic Frisbee - so be careful. Remember the manufacturers won't replace any product damaged during installation.

POWERPC

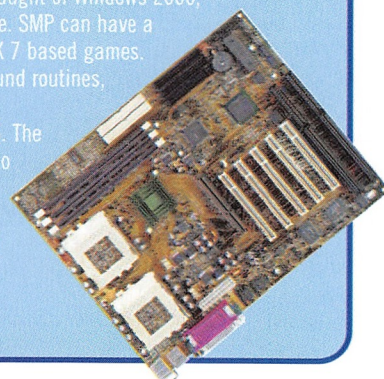
After you've mounted the motherboard firmly, you'll need to connect the case power supply unit to the motherboard. First of all, make sure that the power supply is not connected to an outlet. After you've checked this, you'll want to connect the multi-coloured 20-pin ATX power cable to the available motherboard socket. There should be no problem with orientation, as there is only one way that the plug can fit - there is a large bump on one side. Push it in firmly.

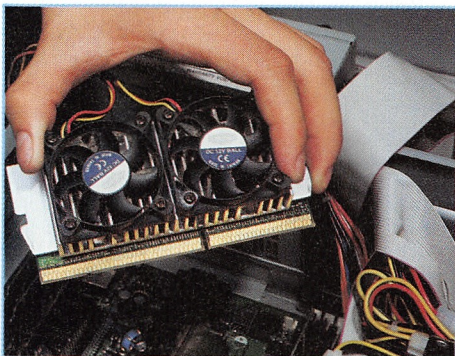
With the power supply connected to the motherboard, you'll now need to attach any system fans. A system will not function unless adequate cooling is present. In the case of the CPU, the included cable should plug into the 2/3-pin riser adjacent to the CPU slot. Any other case fans can be attached to a spare 3-pin power cable.

DUAL CPU MOTHERBOARDS

Dual CPU (SMP) motherboards used to be the preserve of UNIX users and those with more money than God. Not any more. Although it remains quite costly, the onslaught of Windows 2000, BeOS and Linux has made SMP a viable option for the gaming elite. SMP can have a significant impact upon the framerates of any OpenGL and DirectX 7 based games. In Quake3, for example, one processor handles lighting, AI and sound routines, while the second deals with geometry issues.

Probably the most affordable SMP motherboard is the Abit BP6. The BP6 is an innovative i440 BX based motherboard that allows you to use two Socket 370 Celerons in tandem. It also includes a range of overclocking features, ATA/66 kung fu and Abit's proprietary Soft-Menu II. You should be able to get a BP6 for under \$300, and two Celeron 466s for about \$180 each. In all, you get workstation performance for under \$600.





When it comes to fans, more is almost always better.

► The case headers are what connect the LEDs and power switch on the front of your case to the motherboard. This is completely essential, as you'll need it to be able to turn your rig on! Sadly, you'll have to consult your manufacturer's manual for this, as there are countless different ways in which this can be carried out. Needless to say, make sure these are connected properly, and that you have checked the polarisations thoroughly.

CARD TRICKS

The videocard is the first add-in card you'll want to attach to test if your new motherboard is working properly. The videocard will rest in the AGP slot, which is usually brown-coloured. Remove the mounting bracket from the back of the case, and slowly push the edge of the videocard into the slot. Make sure you exert pressure on both sides, so that the card is sitting evenly. Then, screw the card into place.

Now hook the monitor, videocard and power supply unit up to the computer, and power it up. Bon chance! Odds are that it won't work. Something is almost always in backwards. Unplug the computer and check everything. When you get it working, congratulations.

Note: PC PowerPlay is not responsible for any damage done to your system as a result of the instructions described in this guide. ■

HOTLINKS



www.reactorcritical.com
The latest beta drivers and patches to keep your PC running at full speed!



<http://free.be.com>
Download your free multimedia operating system. Only 60mb.



www.amdzone.com
Up-to-the minute AMD news. Also includes essential guides to tweaking your AMD processor and motherboard.



www.theregister.co.uk
Industry news and gossip.

1Ghz

CHEEK-FLAPPING SPEED, AT A COST

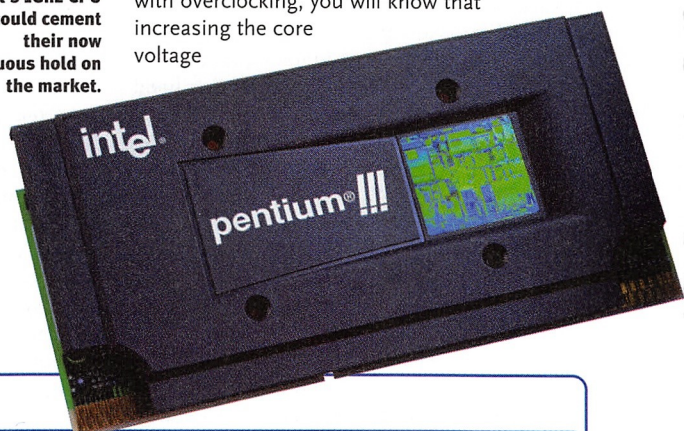
Earlier this month, both Intel and American Micro Devices announced high-end processors based upon 1Ghz technology. Indeed, it's hard to believe that little more than two months ago, both Intel and AMD had just announced their 800mhz models.

The Giga-monster represents the cutting edge of x86 technology. In a blatant bid to boost sales, major PC manufacturers have characterised the launch of these new 'wunder-CPU's' as something akin to the Second Coming. But is this nothing more than a media frenzy, or is the 1 Ghz achievement of any really worthwhile performance value? More importantly, will it have any discernable impact upon gameplay?

CORE PROBLEMS?

In our opinion, the new processors share some major technical issues. If you're familiar with overclocking, you will know that increasing the core voltage

Intel's 1Ghz CPU could cement their now tenuous hold on the market.



QUICKBYTES

Service Pack 7.5

If you're a Windows NT Workstation user, you'll be pleased to know that Microsoft has finally finished Service Pack 7.5. This major upgrade is particularly useful to gamers, as it includes a host of new multimedia features. Some of the changes include:

- DirectX 5.0 API Support
- 45% more optimized code than SP 6.0a
- Internet Explorer 5.5 included!
- Integrated DSL/Cable/Satellite Support

MP3 Walkman

This isn't strictly gaming related, but we know you're all Mp3 junkies! Diamond have just announced the Rio 600 portable MP3 player.

Diamond, recently bought by S3, were the first company onto the market with the original and ubiquitous Rio, and they look set to retain their lead. Unlike its predecessor, the new Rio will sport a sexy new contoured design. Powered by the Cirrus Logic 'Maverick' processor, the latest incarnation of the Rio will be able to read Mpeg Layer-3, Windows Media Format (.WMF) and Advanced Audio Coding (.AAC) files. The Maverick processor features a programmable ARM unit, which enables it to be easily upgradeable over the Internet - you'll be able to download new audio codecs as they emerge. Essentially, you won't be caught with an obsolete product for quite some time! Unfortunately, the



Maverick processor has built-in 'digital rights management security.' Should satisfy the RIAA (?? - Recording Industry Association?)!

BeOS R5 Free!

Be Incorporated have just made the latest version of their operating system, BeOS R5, available free on their web site. BeOS R5 is the latest version of BeOS, one of the more popular 'alternative' operating systems. Be founder Jean-Louis Gasse left Apple Computer in 1990 to create a operating system that could exploit new architectural ideas and be free of the baggage that older operating systems invariably bring with them. Because BeOS has little legacy baggage to carry,



INSANITY

of any processor can allow you to reach otherwise impossible speeds. As a side effect, your processor runs at a much higher temperature. It's an exponential process: only small increases in voltage can double the core temperature of a microprocessor. Obviously, this has a detrimental effect upon stability. Both AMD and Intel have used serious voltage tweaking to reach the lofty height of 1 Ghz.

In the case of the Athlon, AMD have increased the core voltage from 1.65 volts up to a massive 1.8 volts. To increase the heat dissipation, the AMD engineers have included the largest retail fan ever produced with the processor. Disregarding the excessive noise of the fan, we are left with a processor that has been pushed right to the limits of its performance envelope. Naturally, you'll need an extremely capable case power supply to feed this monster - Sadly, the stringent power demands may stop the giga-Athlon from being a viable upgrade for existing Athlon users.

Similarly, Intel has recklessly boosted the voltage of their flagship processor to accommodate the extra speed. The original Coppermine ran at 1.5volts, whereas the latest incarnation runs at a sizzling 1.7volts. As you know, the Pentium III is based on an updated version of the venerable P6 architecture. The P6 core originally debuted with the Pentium Pro, over 5 years ago. Although it's a capable design, it wasn't originally intended to reach such levels. Considering, the fact that the Pentium Pro was originally released at 150mhz, the move to 1000mhz is quite a feat. Basically, it's clear that Intel and AMD are pushing their processors right to the limit - and it shows. There have already been quite a few concerns raised about the stability of such highly clocked processors. Indeed, up until now, processors were sold with quite a bit of headroom. Now, the latest

processors won't run reliably without a highly ventilated case, a colossal fan and a very advanced power supply.

CPU BUYER'S GUIDE: UPDATE

In light of this, what are our recommendations for system upgrading? Although it is an impressive speed to reach, the 1Ghz benchmark is nothing more than an arbitrary milestone. Certainly, it isn't the holy grail of computing, as many manufacturers would have us 'mere consumers' believe. In fact, the actual real-world performance gain is close to negligible. In reality, there isn't a game or application available that would even slightly stress these CPUs. Also consider, that you are paying a significant premium for this technology. When buying a new CPU, we always avoid buying the top of the line solution: as a whole, they don't offer the performance advantage to justify their exorbitant price. We admonish you stick to something more cost effective, and in place opt for a better videocard or more RAM. Furthermore, the giga-processors are very hard to find. The low yields have ensured that very few have hit the market, with most of the initial batch going to large computer manufacturers.

So our CPU of the month goes to the .18 micron AMD Athlon 800. This relatively new chip is considerably cheaper than a similarly clocked Pentium III. It is also significantly faster. Couple this with the fab new Asus K7V motherboard, and you'll be in gaming nirvana. As long as you can find one of the elusive 'Goldfinger' expansion cards, the new .18 micron architecture

allows for decent overclockability. If you're patient, you might want to wait until 'Thunderbird'. At the moment, the most major bottleneck in the Athlon is the pitifully slow cache. Thunderbird, the much-anticipated re-design of the Athlon processor, will include 256k of full speed on-die L2 cache. Also, the move to copper interconnects should allow the Athlon to scale way above the Gigahertz level. Running at a healthy 1.7v, it will be available in both Slot-A and Socket-A flavours.

If you're an Intel fan, the Pentium III 550 Coppermine offers the best performance/cost ratio available in the Intel line-up. The combo of SSE instructions and on-chip cache works well for gamers. Although we don't recommend overclocking, the 550MHz Coppermines almost always reach 733MHz with minimal tweaking. Of course, a large fan is advisable! These 550s are quickly disappearing, so make it sharpish! ■



AMD's 1Ghz CPU could signal the end of Intel's current reign as CPU kings.

QUICKBYTES

its system is seen as simpler, easier to maintain and evolve, and less prone to failure. The first BeOS was used in a computer called the BeBox, since abandoned so the company could concentrate on the software. Anticipating the arrival of DVD and very large files such as feature-length movies, BeOS provides a fully 64-bit file system that can handle files of terabyte size. The operating system no longer has to be a bottleneck between the Internet, applications, and the user.

Aimed at the home user, the latest version will be downloadable through any browser, and will run from within your Windows/Linux partition. For instance, you'll be able to boot up the operating system from within Windows, rather than having to reboot. Most importantly, BeOS R5 includes much

better hardware support. It should now run on almost any relatively new computer equipment. It also includes much improved 3D accelerator functions. A number of games are in development.

You can download BeOS R5 from <http://free.be.com> or find it on this month's CD PowerPlay.

IBM 75GB Hard Disk!

IBM has just announced the release of the Deskstar 75GXP, the largest hard disk available on the market. The Deskstar 75GXP can hold a mammoth 75 gigabytes of data and spins at an impressive 7,200rpm. It is also the first drive to ship that supports the

UltraATA/100 interface. The next generation UltraATA/100 technology allows for maximum burst speeds of 100MB a second.

RIP: Abit BP6

The local distributor of the Abit BP6 has stopped sourcing the infamous Abit BP6 dual Celeron board from Taiwan. The BP6 combined the famous overclockability of Abit boards with the ability to run two Celeron processors in tandem. Most importantly, it offered workstation performance at a bloody low price. Although the BP6 was a tweakers dream, Abit have deemed it merely a hobbyist's board rather than a useful mainstream product. Shame, really.



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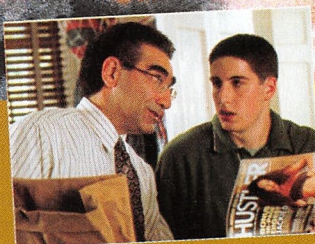
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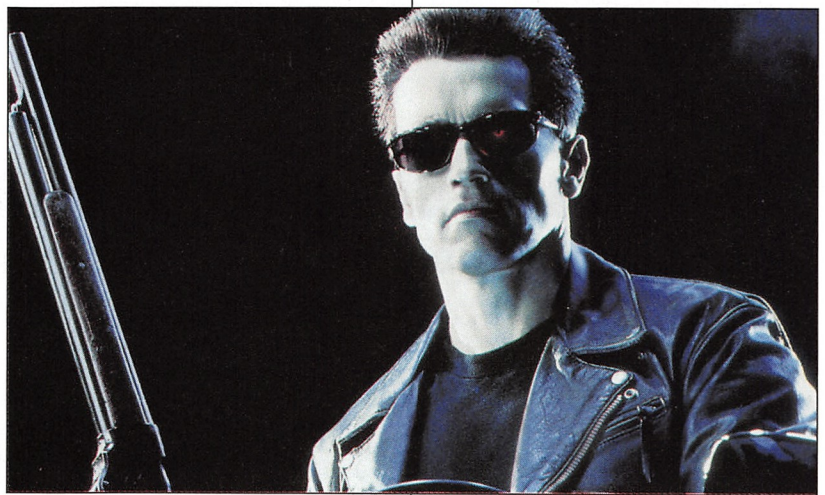
- ◆ Wild Wild West
- ◆ Deep Blue Sea
- ◆ American Pie
- ◆ Terminator 2



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WHAT'S HOT!

Wild Wild West
Deep Blue Sea
American Pie
Terminator 2
AND MORE!



ASUS V6800 GeForce DDR

RRP: \$420 **DISTRIBUTOR:** CASSA AUSTRALIA (07) 54452992

As most of you know, the GeForce 256 has the world's first GPU (Graphics Processing Unit). Basically, a GPU takes care of rendering related processes that had in the past been done by the CPU. The idea is to free up the CPU for other useful tasks. In all, the nVidia GeForce is the fastest graphics chipset available on the market.

The AGP-V6800 is almost identical to the Asus AGP-V6600 we reviewed three months back. The only real difference between the two products is the type of onboard memory. The AGP-V6600 uses no-frills SDR (Single Data Rate) Memory, whilst the AGP-V6800 uses DDR (Double Data Rate) memory. DDR effectively doubles the amount of memory bandwidth available, allowing the Geforce to operate at maximum potential. Previously, Geforce cards had been hampered by the limited speed of SDR memory. The AGP-V6800 also features the same ASUS SmartDoctor utility that is available with the AGP-V6600. SmartDoctor includes AGP power level monitoring, fan RPM monitoring, and allows

for 'Dynamic Overclocking'. ASUS wants to put out the most stable video card out there, overclocked or not. The fan RPM and temperature monitoring ensure that your ASUS card won't ever overheat and go belly-up on you - If your graphics chip reaches dangerous temperatures, the Dynamic Overclocking feature will forcibly cool down the chip to an acceptable temperature.

Asus has opted to include Drakan, Rollcage and a demo CD with the card. Although they aren't the most cutting edge games, they'll certainly keep you occupied. They've also thrown in WinDVD, one of the most powerful software DVD players available. WinDVD will take full advantage of the GeForce's impressive motion compensation ability.



Despite the addition of DDR RAM, SmartDoctor technologies and a handful of games, the AGP-V6800 Pure is a rather 'no frills' product. Certainly, it doesn't come with all of the bells and whistles of the Deluxe version. Nevertheless, if you're after a bloody fast games card (who isn't?) without all the extraneous rubbish, the AGP-V6800 comes top of the pops.

Hugh Norton-Smith

CREATIVE Sound Blaster Live! Platinum

RRP: \$499 **DISTRIBUTOR:** CREATIVE PACIFIC (02) 96666100

After more than a year since the first Sound Blaster Live! Card appeared in the market, Creative has now released three new cards as an addition to the Live! Family. The Sound Blaster Live! Platinum is their flagship product, aimed primarily at music aficionados

and those with more money than Donald Trump.

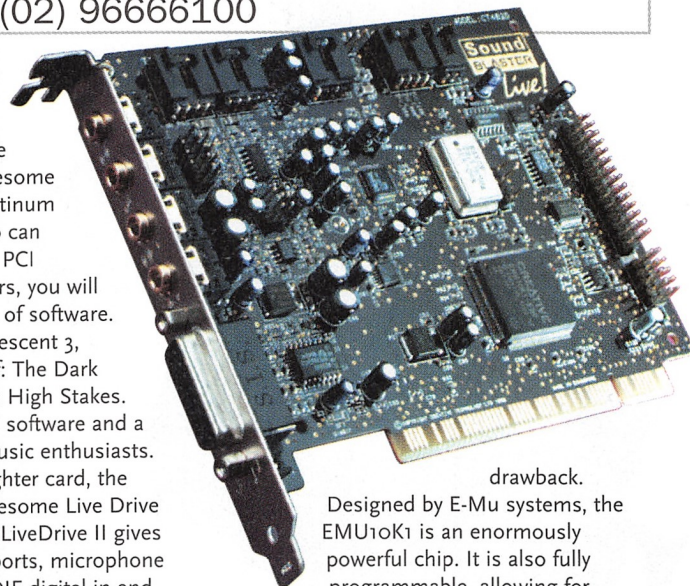
Although it is significantly more expensive than any of the competition, including the awesome Terratec DMX, the SB Live! Platinum really is the card for those who can afford it. Besides the standard PCI soundcard with gold connectors, you will find an incredibly large bundle of software. On the gaming side, there's Descent 3, Gaming Commander SE, Thief: The Dark Project and Need For Speed 4: High Stakes. There is also voice recognition software and a ton of software for budding music enthusiasts.

Instead of the old I/O daughter card, the Platinum now includes the awesome Live Drive II. Housed in a 5 1/4" bay, the LiveDrive II gives you front access to the MIDI ports, microphone jack, headphone jack, and SPDIF digital in and out connectors. In addition, you get volume controls for the headphone and microphone jacks right at the front of your box. Finally, there are two optical plugs for digital recording to MiniDisc and DAT. Besides all this, it looks outrageously cool.

It's important to note that all of the Live! products are based on the same EMU10K1 audio processor. Don't consider this a



The SB Live! Platinum puts all the knobs 'n' stuff on the front of your PC. Ingenious!



drawback. Designed by E-Mu systems, the EMU10K1 is an enormously powerful chip. It is also fully programmable, allowing for constant updates to the core technology via new versions of the LiveWare software. As one would expect, the card sounds great. In terms of EAX and multi-speaker performance, the Platinum slaps the competition around like an unruly redheaded stepson. In all, the SB Live! Platinum is the best consumer-level digital board available.

Hugh Norton-Smith

CAMBRIDGE SOUNDWORKS FPS1000 Speakers

RRP: \$239 DISTRIBUTOR: CREATIVE PACIFIC (02) 96666100

Cambridge SoundWorks have always been at the forefront of PC audio equipment. Their original FPS1000 speakers were the first four point surround speakers specifically designed for the PC. Compared to the original Four Point Surround, the only real difference is the new badging and silver finish. Despite this, they remain very capable speakers. The FPS1000 sport a 4.1 design, which means there are 4 satellite speakers reinforced by a central subwoofer. The rear speakers are mounted upon two stands, so that they sit level with their frontal counterparts. This design allows for true surround sound, instead of emulating it via 2 speakers. With 4 speakers, 3D positional sound can really work its magic. In our minds, four-speaker sound has become a gaming must-have. You can hear rockets pass overhead, feel the distant rumblings of approaching tanks or witness the guttural roar of a Formula 1 engine.

For such a cheap system, the FPS 1000 is of exceptional quality: If you're an MP3



I'm speechless.

enthusiast, you'll appreciate the full bass, and decent treble pick-up. Overall, this is a nice system for anyone in need of a four-speaker fix. It's at a great price, but don't expect it to wake up the neighbours.

If you're after a really cutting edge system, we recommend you take a look at the Cambridge 5.1 Desktop Theatre 5.1 DTT2500.
Hugh Norton-Smith

SAITEK GM2 Gaming Mouse

RRP: \$119.50 DISTRIBUTOR: INNOVISION (03) 58318833

Hardcore Quake fans have always relied on the trusty mouse/keyboard combination for control. Quite simply, nothing else quite matches the responsiveness and speed of this setup. Over the years, several manufacturers have attempted to capture this specialist market, with some truly bizarre products. Without exception, and much to our careful disappointment, all nosedived. The Saitek GM2 takes a novel approach: it doesn't attempt to integrate the mouse/keyboard into one wacky device. Instead, we have a highly refined version of the original mouse/keyboard concept.

Saitek's GM2 comes in two parts: First, a multi-functional two-button mouse with a scroll wheel and a four-way hat switch. Personally, we use the scroll wheel for weapon selection, and the point of view hat for issuing commands. While it isn't quite as elegant as its Logitech and Microsoft competition, the mouse component has a comfortable design that makes it ideal for sustained fragfests. Although designed for gaming, it's a very competent desktop rodent - the scroll wheel can be easily configured for effortless web browsing. The second part, an action pad, comes with 6 buttons, a rotary wheel, another hat switch and a shift button. The action pad is designed to

replace the keyboard entirely. Needless to say, the action pad is fully programmable using Saitek's new control software; you use the hat switch for moving and strafing, and configure the buttons for other commands. In fact, you can even program the pad to perform an ultra-complex rocket-jump in Quake3!

With USB connectivity, the GM2 is easily installed under Windows 98. Just plug in, and run the included setup CD. Calibration is achieved through the usual Windows applet. However, for older DOS and Windows 95 games, the GM2 has some major problems. Also, there are no drivers available for Windows 2000/Linux users. Despite these minor complaints, the GM2 is an excellent product at a highly competitive price.

Hugh Norton-Smith



The big question is: can you strafe with a hat?

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SETUP



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HOT CHIPS!

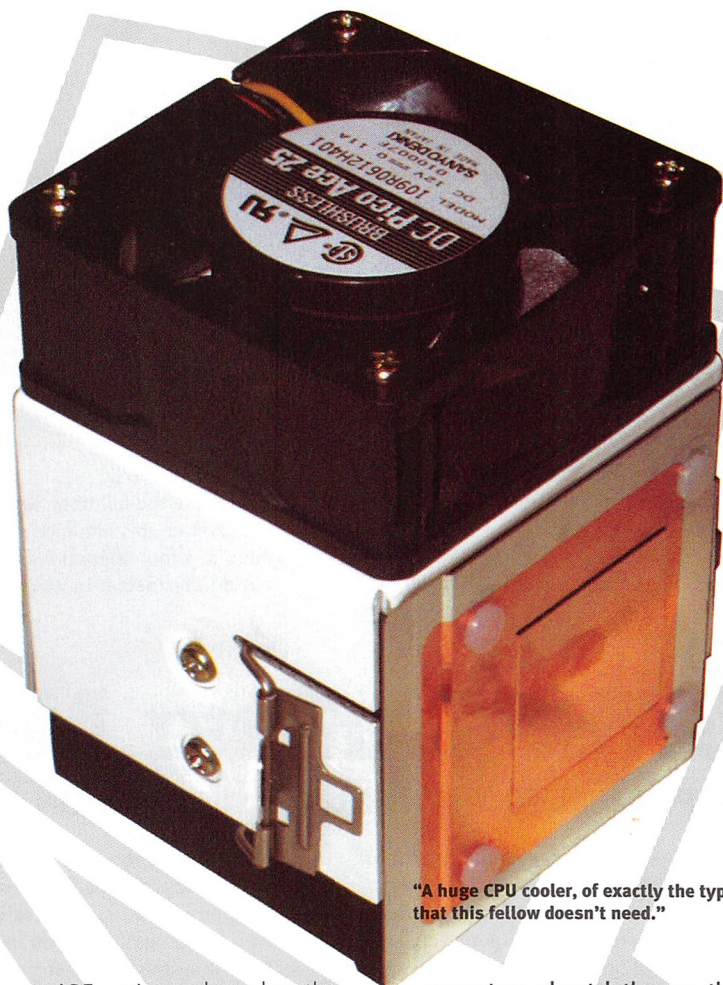
Q> I am currently running a P200MMX computer and while I'm saving for an upgrade kit, I have tried to overclock it up to 233 (the maximum on my standard Socket 7). This is a fairly simple task as I have a jumperless motherboard. The only thing I'm concerned about is the amount of heat it is generating. When I boost it to 233 after a game of Counterstrike it gets up to about 44 degrees - the highest I've ever seen it is at 47 degrees. I have a Banshee videocard that I guess would take some strain off the CPU. When just browsing the net or using Word I run Rain (which uses hlt commands). It then runs at about 33 degrees. I live in a pretty warm area so that might not help, but what is a fairly safe temperature before it would say... melt?

This is never really covered in any Overclocking guides. I've heard that 70 is around danger zone. I have a fairly large heatsink and a large sleeve fan which are all working correctly. I have an ATX midi tower with one fan at the back in the power supply. I also plan on putting a fan at the front in the fan bracket. I'm not sure if this will do much. Any help would be appreciated.

Aaron Thomas

A> The temperature number you're seeing comes, most likely, from a sensor on the motherboard, underneath the processor socket. You know exactly how hot the sensor is, but you've got no real idea how hot the CPU core is - it's hotter, but how much hotter? More recent Intel processors have a little thermal diode built-in, that better motherboards can read, but old Pentiums have no such luxury.

Fortunately, CPUs can run perfectly happily at really alarming temperatures, and they'll temporarily stop working properly - causing the computer to crash - before they get hot enough to be permanently hurt. For pretty much any current processor, if you don't get crashes after some length of warm-up time, then don't worry about it. If you think



"A huge CPU cooler, of exactly the type that this fellow doesn't need."

you ARE getting such crashes, then take the lid off your computer and let an ordinary desk fan blow into it. If the crashes go away, then it's definitely a thermal problem, and a better CPU cooler will help.

Your overclocking won't make much difference to the CPU temperature - you're only winding the processor up by 16.5%, and if you don't increase the core voltage, heat output won't change much either.

FUZZY TV?

Q> I have a Voodoo 3 3000 AGP card with TV out. I have tried to get it to display on my TV but I only get a fuzzy black and white image with no sound. My TV does not have a direct connection so I plug the video card through my VCR audio and video jacks. Ultimately I would like to play DVD movies on my

computer and watch them on the TV. What do I need to do this?

Tony Reitner

A> Point 1: If a TV out gives you a crummy black and white image, it's odds on that you're sending a US-standard NTSC signal to an Australian-standard PAL TV. NTSC sorta-kinda displays on PAL devices, but as you can see, it's nothing you'd view for pleasure. Your Voodoo 3 3000 is the US NTSC version, and cannot output PAL video. Some videocards can do both, but the V3 3000 can't; some TVs and VCRs can handle NTSC, but clearly your setup can't. NTSC has lower resolution than PAL, anyway (but a higher refresh rate).

You need the PAL version; if you bought this card in Australia and weren't told the TV out was NTSC, then you're entitled to the version that can actually be used to do what

LETTER OF THE MONTH

WHAT TO DO?

Q> I want to play Quake 3: Arena and Unreal Tournament smoothly, but at the moment I can't even think about putting them in the CD-ROM drive. I want to know what would be the best way to fix my problem without spending a couple of thousand? At the moment I have a Pentium 166, 33.6K modem, a 24xCD-ROM drive, 3.2Gb hard drive, 32Mb of RAM and no 3D card, which makes my computer a pretty bad computer.

My problems are:

- 1) My modem is visiting lag city with ping levels of over 1000 all the time. I know I will want to play Q3A and UT on the internet, so what should I do to leave lag city?
- 2) Will upgrading 32Mb of RAM do much to the gameplay of either game, and if so how much do I need?
- 3) I know I need a 3D card, but with so many on the market what would be the best for me and not take too much out of my pocket?
- 4) Does my Pentium 166 need upgrading or will that do nothing dramatic to the games?
- 5) Is a 24xCD-ROM fast enough to handle the games?
- 6) And finally, would it be better to get a new computer? If so, what would it need to have?

Thanks

Riley Cocklin, Email

A> 1) A V.34bis (33.6 kilobit per second) modem will never really give you decent playability for action games on any server. You've got to upgrade to V.90 ("56K" - it's not really going to connect that fast, though). But that doesn't entirely account for the level of ping suckage you report. You're either choosing the servers you play on poorly - you want an Australian server, not a foreign one - or your ISP is sharing too little bandwidth among too many users and/or using a connection well away from the backbone. A 56K modem will set you back maybe \$120.

2) It's easy to tell whether a Windows machine needs more RAM for a given task - if

it's flogging the bejesus out of its hard drive while doing something which does NOT actually involve loading or saving stuff from that drive, add RAM. If it isn't, don't. 64Mb is pretty much the working minimum for Win95/98, though, whether you're playing games or running office applications. 128Mb is tastier, but not as much better than 64Mb as 64Mb is better than 32Mb. There's no point in getting more than 64Mb of RAM, though, if you're going to stick with your current CPU and video card.

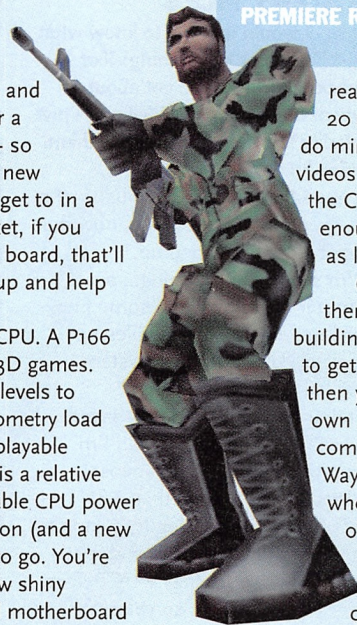
3) In the new product market, you could get yourself a cheap nVidia based card - a TNT or a TNT2 Model 64 ("M64"). They ought to cost less than \$150 by the time you read this. Your old motherboard probably doesn't have an AGP slot - and might not be able to power a modern AGP card anyway - so you'll need a PCI one, or a new motherboard - which we'll get to in a moment. In the used market, if you can find a cheap Voodoo 2 board, that'll work with your current setup and help quite a lot.

4) Yes, you need a new CPU. A P166 does not cut it for modern 3D games. You can set all of the detail levels to minimum to reduce the geometry load on the CPU and get barely playable frame rates, but "playable" is a relative term. If you're after reasonable CPU power on the cheap, an Intel Celeron (and a new motherboard...) is the way to go. You're talking about \$400 for a new shiny 466MHz-or-better CPU and motherboard together, or rather less if you find an older, slower Celeron. Unfortunately, your old RAM (72 pin EDO SIMMs, right?) won't work in the new board's SDRAM sockets; fortunately, you've only got 32Mb of RAM to lose. RAM prices are on the way down again, so a 64Mb SDRAM module ought not to cost you any more than \$150.

5) The CD-ROM is fine. Any old CD-ROM drive will do for installing games, unless you



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS THE MOST EXCELLENT SIDEWINDER AND DUAL STRIKE CONTROL PADS FROM MICROSOFT'S PREMIERE RANGE OF GAME CONTROLLERS. CHEERS MICROSOFT!



really care if the initial install takes 20 minutes instead of 10. But if you do minimal installs and have to play videos and load other game data from the CD, really old drives aren't good enough. A 24X will do nicely, though, as long as it's in decent condition.

6) With all of this upgrading then yes, you're half way towards building a whole new PC. If you want to get power on a budget, though, then you MUST learn how to do your own upgrades; buying built computers is not The Cheapskate's Way. So even if you elect to get a whole new system and retire the old one - it'd make a dandy Linux box, by the way - you should get a how-to-upgrade-your-computer book and do it yourself. It's pretty simple, and you'll save quite a bit. You may find you need a new case and power supply to accommodate a new motherboard, anyway; there goes another hundred bucks. So all you get to keep of the old box is the hard drive, CD-ROM and floppy drive. All told, you'll get away under a thousand bucks, if you don't go for a whole new computer.

it says on the box. Go and raise hell with the dealer. If you bought it from somewhere else, or were told it was NTSC, then you're a certain distance along a tributary of Excrement River, without means of manual propulsion for your aquatic transport.

Point 2: Where you gettin' that sound from, boy? The Voodoo 3 doesn't have audio out (no regular videocard does), so I presume you're actually connecting your sound card's output to the VCR. There should be no problem with hooking up a line out from a sound card to a line in on a VCR; make sure you actually ARE connecting a line out, though.

NETWORK NIGHTMARE

Q> Please help me with my network problem. Me and the guys (4-7 others) have a 10BaseT hub and when in Win98 we all can find and see each other. However when we want to play a game of TA or GP Legends, we all can get in the game but - no joke - within 3-5 seconds all but 2 computers are rejected. It has no favourites - it doesn't happen to the same ones all the time. We have all tried different protocols and addresses and we all have the same workgroup. Please help as this is becoming very frustrating. If you cannot help us then me and the guys are taking up card playing :(

John Robert Joyce

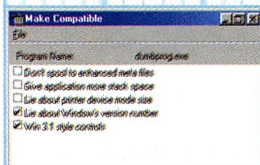
A> If you get OK Windows networking but games fall on their faces, I'll betcha that one or more of you has dud network card drivers.

I'm using my psychic powers... I'm seeing Realtek 8029 PCI network cards (the Realtek chipsets are used in zillions of cards)... I'm seeing you going to <http://www.realtek.com.tw/cn/NEW/doc/8029-driver.htm> and getting the driver that actually bloody WORKS, as opposed to the sometimes-sends-corrupt-data driver that Win98 shipped with... I'm seeing you sending me lots of money if this solves your problem...

TECH TIPS

RETARD WINDOWS!

I have a lot of old Windows apps and games. Mostly these come up with an error, "Incorrect Windows Version". Then I came across MKCOMPAT.EXE, in the C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM directory. It lets me run Win95 like Win3.11, it's just so kewl. Nemesis010



Actually, this might NOT be the problem. The Realtek driver glitch, in my experience, usually lets you play for a good half-hour before it craps itself. Which is MUCH more annoying than having games that just don't start, let me tell you. But I wouldn't be surprised if the driver's killing you. Windows deals pretty well with crapulous data from its own broken driver, but games have poor error-checking.

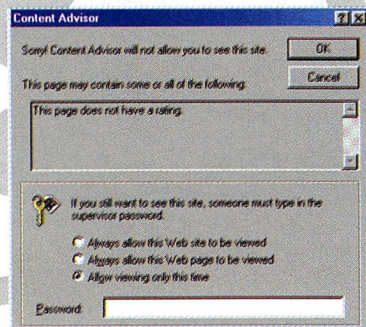
MYSTERY FILES

Q> I would just like to know what the files called things like "File0001.chk" are. I've got about eighty of them on my C drive and I just wanted to know if I could delete them.

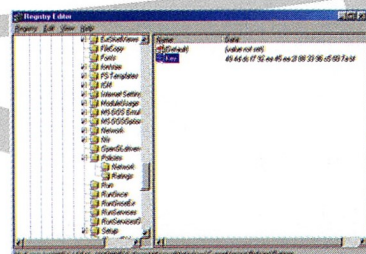
James Frederick Stokes

A> Might as well keep using the old psychic powers, now that I've got 'em all warmed up.

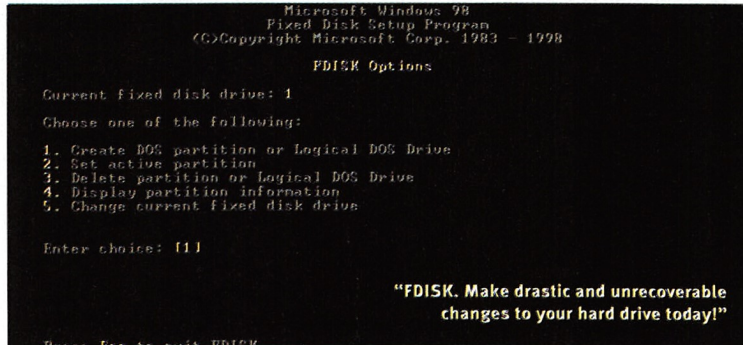
I'm seeing... I'm seeing... a computer crashing when some files are open... I'm seeing the files not being closed, and the file system being left with "lost clusters" containing the incompletely saved data... I'm seeing ScanDisk... I'm seeing you telling it to save lost clusters as files, rather than just delete them... I'm seeing it making a lot of files you will never be able to restore to whatever they were before your system crashed, so you might as well just zap 'em... now I'm seeing you deleting those files, and sending me a crisp \$50 bill... you are getting sleepy... you are getting sleepy...



"Annoying, isn't it?"



"...but easy to kill!"



CONTENT CONTROL CALAMITY!

Q> My litter brother [This is possibly the first letter we've ever received from a cat. - Ed] was playing around with the supervisor passwords in Internet Explorer and he locked out nearly every site on the net. He can't remember the password he put in so a message about content control comes up every time I try to access a website.

D. Price

A> Fortunately, Win95/98 passwords have all the security of a damp cardboard box.

Click Start -> Run, type Regedit and hit return. Welcome to the program that lets you do irreparable harm to your Windows install. Let's get to it, shall we?

Click through in the left panel to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\Ratings Check and delete the key. Reboot, and ye olde Content Advisor will be turned off again. Kids! Turning Content Advisor on is a great way to annoy someone! Adults! Turning Content Advisor on is a crummy way to stop your kids from looking at porn!

PLETHORA OF PROBLEMS...

Q> I got my computer upgraded from a P100 to a PII 200 2 years back. At the time I had a 1.2Gb hard drive. When I got my computer back I got Win95 Release B installed. It could only detect 512Mb of my 1.2Gb. I didn't want to take it back so I decided to compress it using DriveSpace 3. It compressed OK and was working well for a few months. Then Win95B stuffed up and so I did a clean install of Win95. I only had Win95 and not Win95B.

After this reinstall, and copying the Win95B drvspace.vxd file to the Win95 iosubsys directory, everything

was almost normal again. But when I try to scandisk my hard drive it comes up with a message saying "This drive was compressed by a program that is not supported by Scandisk..." It can scan the drive but won't fix compression related errors. Now I can't even uncompress it with the original DriveSpace! I don't want to take it to a store to get it fixed for \$100 (or more!) or get it formatted, so what should I do?

Ranjoy Biswas

A> Oh, man - could you have any MORE problems?!

First, you didn't get a "PII 200", because there's no such thing. I presume you've got a 200MHz Pentium MMX.

Second, whoever installed Win95 Release B on your machine and didn't give you the original disc, authenticity certificate and manual broke the law. Microsoft loves to hear about people who rip off their customers by selling them pirated software; they're almost as interested in dealers who give Windows away, as may have happened in your case. If you did the Windows install yourself from a disc you didn't own, tough luck. Stop pirating software.

Why your computer couldn't see more than 512Mb of drive, I'm not sure. But I suspect it's because whoever reformatted the drive did it in the old FAT16 format (as opposed to FAT32, supported by every Windows version since 95 Release B), which is hideously inefficient on partitions bigger than 512Mb, and doesn't support partitions bigger than 2Gb at all. So they made a little partition, and you've got plenty of drive sitting there waiting to be used. FDISK will let you make new partitions. Make a startup disk (Control Panel -> Add/Remove Programs -> Startup Disk -> Create Disk), boot from it and then run FDISK. The startup disk should have FORMAT on it, too, so you can make the new partitions ready for use..

**1602
A.D.**

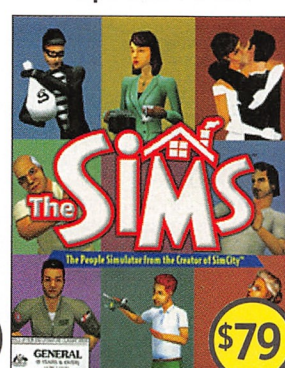
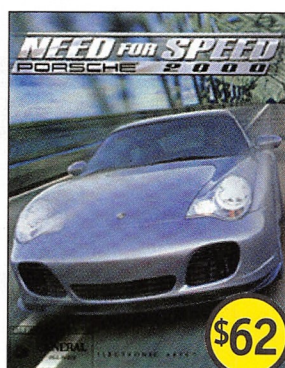
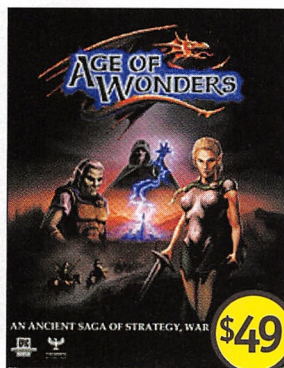
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CD POWERPLAY #49

Starting CD PowerPlay

Welcome to the latest edition of CD PowerPlay. This month's discs include some of the hottest demos from around the world. Without doubt, the highlight this month is the long-awaited demo of Half-Life: Opposing Force, the official add-on for everyone's favourite firstperson shooter. We've also got all the latest and coolest demos we could get our hands on.

As always, navigation through the online menus is easy. Simply click on the category you want and then select the game or utility. We hope you enjoy this month's CD and hope to see you back next month for another dose of gaming goodness.

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PATCHES

Rally Championship 2000 - v5.29.0 Patch

- 1st-2nd gear problem with A8 cars and fully auto gearbox
- replay cameras not working
- several sound tweaks
- game crashing in no sound card detected
- reverse gear had way too much grip, now fixed
- network games are now a lot more stable
- mirror outline fixed in all modes
- save replay slot select bug fixed
- secret cars work correctly in split screen mode
- if run out of time but cross finish line now lets you stay in race

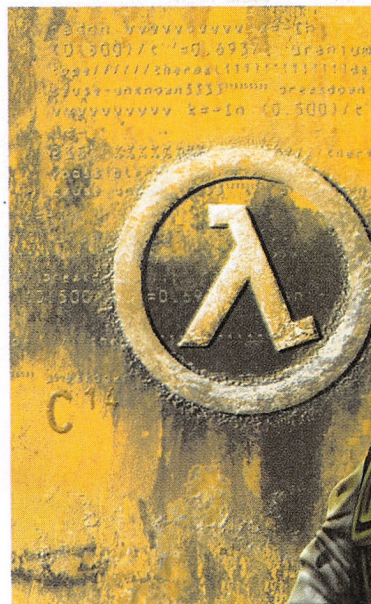
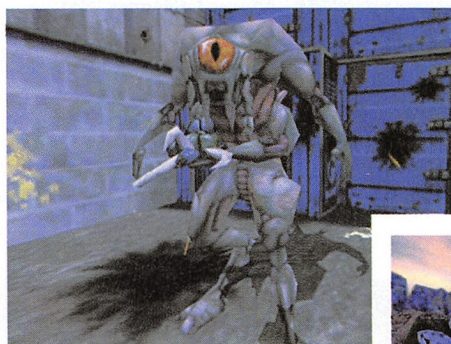
Nox v1.1

Fixes bugs and enhances single and multiplayer gameplay

Star Fleet Commander v1.03

- Movies should now record properly during Mplayer games.
- Shield strengths have been halved for all ships across the board. Some other systems/weapons have been altered back to their normal damage levels to compensate for this.
- Nuclear Space Mines do 35 points of damage.
- Suicide Shuttles do 18 points of damage.
- The number of t-bombs has been reduced.
- Explosion strengths have been reduced.
- Cloaking times have been tweaked to be between the 1.02.01 and 1.01 versions.
- Non-overloaded Photon Torpedoes do their full damage at close range.
- A bug with Legendary Weapons Officers affecting Photons at point blank range has been fixed.

DISC 1



Half-Life: OPPOSING FORCE

Category: 3D Action

Developer: Gearbox

Need: Pentium 133, 24MB, W95/98, SVGA

3D: Direct 3D

Multiplayer: TCP/IP, IPX, Modem

■ Half-Life: Opposing Force is the official game expansion for Half-Life, the PC CD-ROM game PC PowerPlay named "Game of the Year". In Opposing Force, players return to the Black Mesa Research Facility to experience an entirely new episode of single-player action. In addition, Op For contains a massive collection of new multiplayer content.

Remember the soldiers who gave you so much trouble in Half-Life? Now you are one of them—and life is not easy as part of the Opposing Force. As a soldier sent to eliminate Gordon Freeman, you are separated from your base unit. Amidst the chaos, you discover a new alien race that came to Earth through a portal that was opened when Gordon Freeman was transported to the border of the Xen world. It's quickly revealed that these highly advanced alien life forms have come to Earth to pillage the planet.

Although you were originally sent into Black Mesa to silence Freeman and his fellow scientists in the facility, you now find yourself stranded and confused. You are battling fierce new alien creatures and a variety of other foes in an effort to save your life.

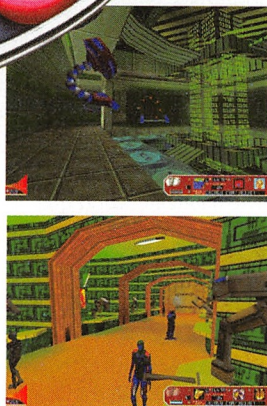


AIWars

Category: 1st Person Shooter
Developer: Nexus Information Systems
Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card
3D: Direct 3D
Multiplayer: N/A

■ In the 21st century all transactions are handled by agents, expert programs that interact on the NET. These Artificial Intelligences act as brokers, salesmen, researchers, and middlemen of all kinds working for their wealthy human masters. Some of

them are smart - very smart - but none are sentient yet. Your role is to select a computer system (or avatar) and with a set of basic programs, start the game.



Evolva

Category: 3D Shooter
Developer: Computer Artworks
Need: P2-266, 32MB, 3D Card
3D: Direct 3D
Multiplayer: N/A

■ Evolva is a tactical shoot-em-up for the PC which immerses the player in a visually stunning 3D world offering a rich gameplaying experience. Driven by Computer Artworks' A-Life technology, this world and its alien inhabitants form a challenging and actually living environment. Evolva sees the player having to fight against an alien parasite that has infected a planet. This parasite has an army of guardians to protect it and they will have to be stopped if the player is to be able to ultimately stop the parasite itself. The player takes control of a team of customisable creatures called Genohunters and guides them through a unique gaming world that mixes the excitement of a fast paced shoot-em-up with the tactical elements of a strategy game.

REVIEWED
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Beetle Buggin'

(Beetle Crazy Cup)

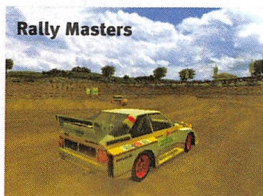
Category: Driving Sim
Developer: Infogrames
Need: P233, 32MB, SVGA 2MB
3D: Direct 3D
Multiplayer: IPX, Split Screen

■ Choose your favourite Beetle Bug and race to become champion of the world. Experience the thrill of breakneck speed as you race against the competition in your powerful, souped-up VW. Defy the laws of gravity by activating your nitro-boosters for a spectacular, high-flying jump. Drive enormous wheels and massive engines on a course littered with cars for your monster vehicle to smash, bash and crash. You can almost taste the dirt in your mouth as you skid around the stock car cross challenge. Enjoy the sun and sand while racing your buggy on the beach, but watch out for that surf - and don't get burned!

Rally Masters

Category: Driving Sim
Developer: Infogrames
Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card
3D: Direct 3D

Multiplayer: TCP/IP, IPX
 ■ Test your mettle against 24 of the world's top rally drivers, including Hannu Mikkola, Stig Blomqvist and both Alister and Colin McRae. A huge variety of different tournaments and championships are available, including the Rally Masters Challenge Cup, Single Races, Time Attack and Ghost Play and the world's premier rallying - the FIA-sanctioned Michelin Race of Champions. See how you fare in this ultimate test of driving nerve and skill.



Controls

Pause - SPACE or ESC
Steer Right - Arrow Right
Steer left - Arrow Left
Accelerate - Arrow Up
Break - Arrow Down
Gear Up - S
Gear Down - A
Look back - ALT
View UP - F1
View Down - F2
Next car - F3
Screen cap - F12
Misc Info - TAB
Framerate - J

In Replay mode (after race):

Toggle Replay controls - Arrow down/Up
Move right (on panel) - Right Arrow
Move Left (on panel) - Left Arrow
End replay - Return/Enter



PATCHES

- Missiles require a short distance to arm their warheads, and can no longer be fired at ranges less than 1.
- Plasma Torpedoes require more power to hold (consistent with their power requirements to charge).
- Type-F launchers hold for 0 power.
- Bases rotate slightly slower.
- ESGs will not start charging until the field discharges or drops.
- A better variety of ships should be available in the single-player campaign games for all races, but especially Romulans and Gorns.
- A few bugs with Alpha Strikes (SHIFT-Z) have been fixed.
- Cloaked ships may launch shuttles.
- Shuttle and missile prices have been adjusted.

The Sims

This patch fixes bugs and improves gameplay.

Unreal Tournament - v4.13

- Fixed occasional green skins on players.
- Eliminated most common cause of crashing on startup for GeForce in D3D mode.
- fixed slow client occasional assertion in UnChan.cpp (last part of the problem that first showed up in 402)
- fixed clients continuing to get data from servers after disconnecting
- fixed problem causing !Bunch->IsError() assertion which was causing some server crashes
- fixed last man standing late entry cheat
- fixed head gib not replicated on headshot in network play
- fixed die at start of feign death and can't respawn in network game
- The detail textures now work correctly in D3D and are reasonably fast (still disabled by default)
- Eliminated squares showing around decals and other modulated textures in 16-bit mode D3D.
- fixed death message when killed in pressure chamber
- fixed keyboard key sticking problem (thanks Chris Norden from Ion Storm/Deus Ex)
- fixed actors getting beginplay events twice if spawned while level is being brought up
- Custom crosshairs > 9 now show up.
- Fixed speech menu bug with mouse staying active.
- Fixed speech menu text positions.
- Fixed bug in bot Assault AI for dealing with team cannons
- D3D uses vertex buffers for all drawing operations - gives



PATCHES

overall performance boost.

- Random bots picks from all 32 (not first 16) - including the specially configured ones
- Can summon specific bots: 'AddBotNamed Alarik' adds the bot with the name Alarik (if he's in the list of configured bots)
- Now shows waiting players on team scoreboards before start of game (players who aren't ready are greyed out)
- Improved bot AI about triggering pressure zone when player is in it
- No longer need to type 'iamtheone' for cheats in single player
- Demos can now play looping - demoplay demofile?loop
- Turbo/hardcore mode is now shown in UBrowser for team games

Gruntz 1.01

- Fixed the missing coin in World 6 Level 4.
- Fixed not being able to get through a couple of levels in "Easy Mode".
- Fixed a few other miscellaneous level bugs.

Force Commander v1.1

- Improves stability for Internet play.
- Improves responsiveness of the interface in high-lag situations. It is required that this patch be installed to play on the MSN Gaming Zone, or against other users with the patch installed. Saved games from the release version will not work if you install the patch. Player files are still compatible, so your campaign progress will not be lost. If you finish the mission you're on before you install the patch, you won't need to play that mission again.

Quake III Arena Point Release 1.16

- Fixed Models and Skins not showing up when you have more than the max (256)
- Fixed Single player loop issue when a bunch of pk3 files (100-200) exist in baseq3
- Fixed issue with greater than 1K server config strings, this only happens when you have several hundred PK3
- Added Q3Space_CTF, a 2 on 2 CTF modification of Q3Tourney6
- Updated bot behaviour to work better with the platform in Q3Space_CTF
- Turn off floating point exceptions (fixes potential crash right after startup)
- Fixed unpure client bug when levelshots loaded out of secondary pk3 files
- Fixed connection issues for pure clients



Rollcage Stage II

Category: Driving Sim

Developer: Psygnosis

Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card

3D: Direct 3D, 3DFX

Multiplayer: N/A

■ Rollcage Stage II is the sequel to Rollcage. Just as in the original, Rollcage Stage II features cool, drive anywhere, flip-over cars that race at extreme speeds. The unique driving experience offered by Rollcage is still retained and has been improved on in this sequel. Like any sequel, it has more of everything: more cars, more tracks, and more game modes. But it's not just a case of more is better; the developers have listened to the criticisms of Rollcage and have gone to great lengths to make the game more fun, easy to pick up, and more rewarding to play.

Metal Fatigue

Category: Strategy (Real Time)

Developer: Psygnosis

Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card

3D: Direct 3D

Multiplayer: N/A

■ Metal Fatigue is a real-time strategy game that follows the story of three brothers caught up on opposite sides of a war over the riches of long dead alien civilisation. Set in a fully 3D world with multiple camera angles, Metal Fatigue stands apart from the genre with its numerous innovations: giant, re-configurable Combots; 3-Level Play, artificial intelligence from award-winning game designer, Mark Baldwin; and a pre-build phase that gives the player a enough time to establish their base before being attacked.

The Rift

Category: Strategy (Real Time)

Developer: Thrushwave

Need: P166, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card



The habitable world that was your destination does not exist. Take command of 75 unique vessels from 3 radically different races. Your mission is to lead the Proximan colonists to safety, back to Terra to bring your vengeance to bear on those who have betrayed them.

X-tension

Category: Rolling Demo

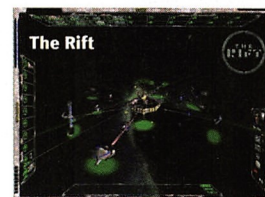
Developer: THQ

Need: P120, 32MB, SVGA

3D: Direct 3D

Multiplayer: N/A

■ X-tension is a new game based on X-Beyond the Frontier. You end up in a completely undiscovered part of the universe. Alone and lost. Against you: the firepower of more than 10000 potentially enemy ships. It's up to you to either fight or make sure not all of these



ships really become your enemies. There are more than 100 differently designed spaceships and stations of different races. You can travel through a web of hyperspace gates which connect systems in all the corners of the most distant galaxies. A playable demo should be out soon. This demo requires Direct X 6 (or higher) as well as Microsoft Mediaplayer (latest version is on this CD). Both components must be installed on your system before running the X-TENSION rolling demo!

3D: Direct3D
Multiplayer: N/A
■ Either Earth was wrong, or they lied... As ex-black marketeer Jacob Viscero, stowaway aboard the colony vessel Copernicus, your 15 year journey has just completed. Now aboard your temporary home, the space station Deliverance, the sensor data has been analyzed.

Shadow Watch

Category: Strategy (Turn Based)

Developer: Red Storm Entertainment

Need: P133, 32MB, SVGA

3D: N/A

Multiplayer: TCP/IP, IPX, Modem

■ You will lead a crack team of operatives to uncover a nefarious plot to stop humanity's advancement to the stars. As chief of the corporation's security team, you will track and interrogate contacts in exotic locales like Rio de Janeiro and Hong Kong. How you question them will change the plot, so ask carefully. When you have the answers you need, launch covert missions using your team to rescue hostages, plant surveillance devices, raze buildings, and assault enemy strongholds. This isn't a battle to save the world; it's a battle to save every world.



REVIEWED
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DISC 2



Croc 2

Category: Adventure

Developer: Fox Interactive

Need: P2-266, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card

3D: Direct 3D

Multiplayer: N/A

■ Things were quiet in the Gobbo Valley since Croc got rid of Dante. The Gobbos liked it that way, but Croc started to feel more and more unsettled. One day while Croc was walking on the beach, a bottle washed up at his feet. He picked it up and found inside a message saying, "Lost Croc" with a picture of a baby crocodile footprint.

He took it to King Rufus who read it and thought to himself and eventually told Croc that he would need to go to a far away land where there were other Gobbos who might be able to help him find his parents! Now you must help Croc as he explores many interesting levels within four Gobbo tribe villages, each packed with unique Gobbos, mischievous monsters, and tons of surprises.

Cue Club

Category: Sports - Pool Sim

Developer: Midas Interactive

Need: P166, 16MB, SVGA 2MB

3D: TCP/IP, IPX

Multiplayer: N/A

■ CueClub is a comprehensive and highly playable pool and snooker simulation. Preferring an overhead view of the table, CueClub allows you to play the entire game using only the mouse. This makes the game instantly playable and highly addictive. With a choice of different table

designs and a healthy selection of games (UK 8 Ball, US 8 Ball, 9 Ball, Snooker, Killer and Speed Pool), there's plenty to keep you occupied.

High Heat Baseball 2001

Category: Sports - Baseball

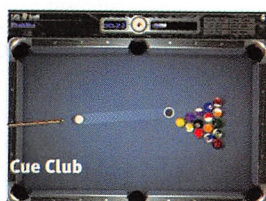
Developer: 3DO

Need: P166, 16MB, SVGA, 3D Card

3D: Direct 3D

Multiplayer: TCP/IP, Modem

■ The High Heat Baseball 2001 computer game



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brings in a whole new set of premier features that push the limits of gameplay and let the baseball fan take control of the perfect game. This year 3DO have included everything baseball gamers wanted in High Heat Baseball 2000 and much more. On the field, High Heat Baseball 2001 delivers a "closest-to-the-plate" experience with high-resolution 3D graphics, highly realistic running, fielding, management, and a true focus on batter/pitcher confrontation.

Pinky and the Brain: World Conquest

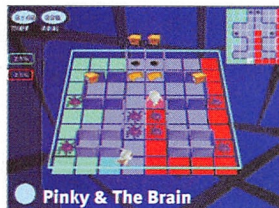
Category: Board/Puzzle
Developer: Southpeak Interactive

Need: P166, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card

3D: Direct 3D

Multiplayer: TCP/IP, IPX

■ Get ready to take over the world. Limber up your mouse hand and put your



brain into overdrive - you've just entered the bizarre maze game called PINKY AND THE BRAIN World Conquest. In this fast-paced, 3-D game, you'll struggle as Pinky or The Brain, controlling new territories while protecting current holdings. Success requires lightning reflexes, nimble fingers and a well-developed funny bone. Play alone or with up to four players competing in tournaments or match play. Just remember in the twisted world of PINKY AND THE BRAIN, it's capture or be captured!

Sudden Strike

Category: Strategy (Real Time)

Developer: CDV Software

Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA

3D: N/A

Multiplayer: TCP/IP, IPX



Invictus

Category: Strategy (Real Time)

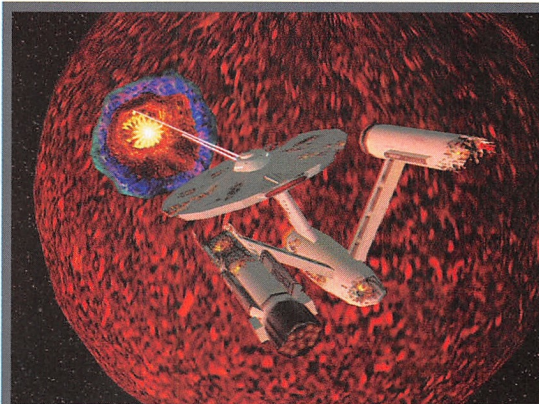
Developer: Interplay

Need: P266, 64MB, SVGA 2MB

3D: N/A

Multiplayer: TCP/IP, IPX, Modem

■ Invictus starts where Homer's Odyssey leaves off. Athena, goddess of wisdom and war, is quite proud of Odysseus' victory, as she was the one who mentored him through his battles and adventures. She even brags to the other gods that she could take any mortal and change him into a hero of epic proportions. Poseidon, who has never been known as a gracious loser, spreads rumors that it was just dumb luck that Odysseus didn't die and that Athena couldn't do it again if her divine life depended on it. The divine gauntlet has been thrown.



Klingon Academy

Category: Space Sim

Developer: Interplay

Need: P2-233, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card

3D: Direct 3D

Multiplayer: TCP/IP

■ Star Trek Klingon Academy is a prequel to Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country. Christopher Plummer reprises his role as General Chang and David Warner as Chancellor Gorkon. Stunning visuals and dramatic lighting effects create a realistic 3D universe to explore and conquer. 25 action packed missions put you in the middle of all out war. Blow your friends out of the stars via the Internet in a Deathmatch, or join with them to defend the Empire in Cooperative missions.



■ The Blockbuster Sudden Strike is set in World War II and offers carefully planned Russian, German, French, American and British missions. The fantastic depth of the game, the infinite tactical possibilities and the excellent game-play outshine anything ever seen to date. Conquer the enemy's positions, win the cleaning-up operations and call in parachutists or fighter bombers for support. Whatever you can think of, you will find - in Sudden Strike!

Super 1 Karting

Category: Driving Sim

Developer: Midas Interactive

Need: P166, 24MB, SVGA, 3D Card

3D: Direct 3D

Multiplayer: TCP/IP, IPX

■ A game featuring a full go-kart simulation of the Karting Grand Prix Championship for the PC. The game will include accurately modelled 3D replicas of all of the international circuits and go-karts used throughout the Karting GP season and the player will have a choice of different class karts in which to race. In addition to the eleven

UTILS

Cute FTP 4.0

CuteFTP is a file transfer application that's easy for beginners to use and has enough features to be useful to power users as well. It uses drag and drop, bookmarks, automatic renaming, and download resuming to make FTP easier, and it includes a macro feature that you can use to record frequent tasks and play them back later with another file.

GameSpy 2.08

GameSpy is a tool for Internet gaming that allows you to get server listings from anywhere on the Internet. Players of multiplayer Quake, QuakeWorld, Quake II, Shogo, Sin, Blood 2, Hexen II, Heretic II, Unreal, and Half-Life can use GameSpy to find lots of servers for multiplayer play. It provides detailed information for each server and can launch games and connect you to the server you want to join. GameSpy can also join the Internet game you specify and offers many other cool features.

ICQ 99b beta

ICQ 99b beta is the latest release of ICQ ("I seek you"), the popular instant messaging program that lets you communicate with friends and colleagues in real time.

Kali 1.68

With more than 600 servers in 65 countries, Kali is the largest Internet gaming system in the world. The Kali system supports high-quality, affordable online gaming with most of today's hottest multiplayer games. This latest version of Kali95 adds launch support for Falcon 4, PowerSlide, Baldur's Gate, Tribes, Jet Fighter Full Burn, Worms: Armageddon, and more. This latest update has added launch support for several new games, the ability to join passworded Tribes servers, and game browser support for Quake 3 Arena. Also, new support for up to 32 players in a game. This demo imposes a 15-minute limit. Lifetime registration, on the other hand, costs a mere \$20 and includes free upgrades.

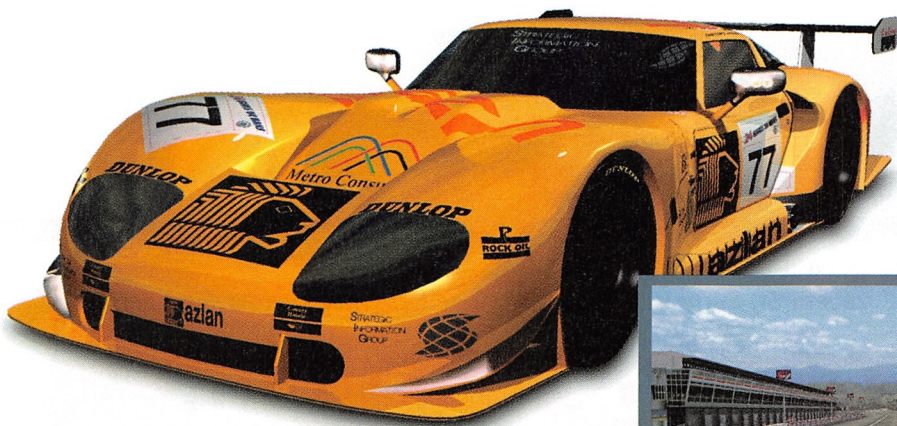
Unzipify 1.03

Unzipify provides an easy one-click method of extracting an entire folder full of ZIP files. Simply right-click on a folder or drive in Windows Explorer, and select "Unzipify". Every ZIP file found in that folder will be extracted at once. You can choose ahead of time to have the files extracted into a single sub-folder or a separate sub-folder for each ZIP file.

Mac POWER



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circuits, there will be a bonus, full GP circuit to race. The player will have to work their way through the various classes earning a racing licence for the next kart class, with the goal being to reach the GP circuit and win using a 150 mph kart.

Test Drive Le Mans

Category: Driving Sim

Developer: Infogrames

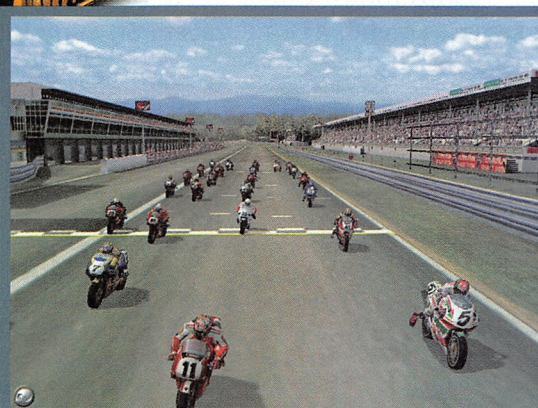
Need: P2-266, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card

3D: Direct 3D, 3DFX

Multiplayer: N/A

■ Test Drive Le Mans roars to the virtual race course, delivering a realistic racing sensation

of 200 mph heart-stopping action on the PC. Gamers compete on official Le Mans sanctioned courses including locations in the French Alps, and landmarks like the famous Dunlop Bridge. Players choose from a wide selection of cars and racing teams, each with multiple styles, individual engine sounds and set-up routines allowing players to maximize performance. With vintage Le Mans around-the-clock racing, day-to-night-to-day lighting conditions and realistic night time effects, Test Drive Le Mans promises intense racing action.



Superbike 2000

Category: Driving Sim

Developer: EA Sports

Need: P233, 32MB, SVGA 2MB

3D: Direct 3D

Multiplayer: TCP/IP, IPX

■ EA Sports offers Superbike 2000 the sequel to the acclaimed Superbike World Championship. Fire up your PC for the most realistic and exhilarating racing sim of any kind. Prove you can handle 150hp with faithfully modelled bikes, bike physics, rides and tracks. Superbike 2000 takes motorcycle racing online with the new internet racing!

UTILS

Netscape Communicator 4.7

Communicator 4.7 is the latest release of the Internet software suite from Netscape. It includes the Winamp MP3 player and is certified as Y2K compliant. Other new features include a Netscape Radio service that allows you to listen to live radio stations, and a new Shop toolbar button that provides quick access to the Netcenter Shop@Netscape area.

mIRC 5.7

mIRC is a configurable IRC client that has an intuitive user interface, an events handler, and full send and receive capabilities for DCC (direct client connection) files. It also has color text, aliases, remote commands, backgrounds option, and sound. It automatically opens Web sites as they are mentioned in a conversation, ignore DCC Sends that match specified filenames or types, and lock the program to disable various features.

PowerStrip 2.6

PowerStrip, designed to complement the native Windows Display Properties sheet under Microsoft Windows 95/98/NT/2000, combines advanced, multi-monitor API support with extensive programmable hardware support.

PS2 Rate

PS2Rate allows you to take greater control over your mouse. This simple 112k download allows you to configure the PS/2 mouse sampling rate on Windows for a much smoother (and more responsive) ride.

Roger Wilco - Mark 1a

This first, official, non-beta, non-test release of Roger Wilco presents a small, standalone application that allows you and your friends to talk to each other while playing multiplayer games online. It works with most existing games, such as Half-Life, Quake II, Diablo, Tribes, Unreal, and StarCraft, and will also work with other games that have multiplayer capabilities still in development. (You can find the full list of compatible games here.) In addition to games, Roger Wilco will work with ICQ so that you can chat verbally with your non-gamer friends.

Please note: Roger Wilco is free, but you must register for a license key to unlock its full functionality. Prior to registration, Roger Wilco operates in a demo mode, which restricts you to 15 minutes spent on a single tuning. Registration is free.

Freeware

BeOS 5

BeOS 5 is an operating system that's designed from the bottom up to unleash the processing power of modern personal computers. To make BeOS 5 available to as many people as possible, we've created this Personal Edition version that fits inside a single compressed file that can be downloaded to your Windows 95, 98, 2000, or Windows NT4 computer. You don't need any special hardware, you don't need a separate partition for your BeOS files, and, best of all, it's free.

Genesis II Freeware Terrain Builder

Genesis II Freeware lets you build fantastic 3D worlds and photorealistic terrain. This program is a

completely functional freeware version of Geomantic's Genesis II Product family, allowing the creation of breathtaking landscapes with breathtaking simplicity. It also delivers photorealistic rendering with full control over base surface, lighting, atmosphere, camera/target and water definition. For more info, check out their website www.woolleysoft.co.uk

Genesis 3D

Genesis 3D is a complete, full version 3D game creation studio that lets you build commercial games and sell them - ROYALTY free!

Genesis 3D is a state-of-the-arts 3D graphic engine built for high performance real-time rendering. This

program offers advanced lighting features, 3D modelling support, seamless soft-skin polygonal characters and many other useful innovations. More info can be obtained from visiting the Genesis 3D website at www.genesis3d.com

Bonus - Unreal Tournament Levels

Over 90 free deathmatch maps for Unreal Tournament. From the weird to the action packed, there's plenty of levels for everyone. Some unlock secret weapons such as the chainsaw and super pulse rifle, while others contain strange mutant creatures, like the cute but deadly little gnomes armed with flak hammers.

Pharaoh Enhancement Pack

The Enhancement Pack adds new features to Pharaoh to make the game even more fun, including: The Mission Editor. With the Mission Editor, you can create new scenarios to your heart's content. You choose everything from which monuments to build to which enemies attack to what the terrain looks like. Plus, you can plan requests, gifts and other events. Test your city-building skills with new custom missions. Many other new features have been added to provide more feedback and to improve gameplay.

IN-BOX

Letters Tip #10: Always ensure that the tray is well greased when baking cookies.

WRITE TO: PC PowerPlay Letters, Level 6, 418A Elizabeth St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010. letters@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

Byte Size

How big is a byte-sized letter?

BigDog, email

And how smart is a piece of string? (Close enough - Ed)

Consoles and PC... Can we be friends?

I've just been pondering this idea for a while. With the introduction of net-enabled consoles I was just wondering if it would be possible for console gamers to play (hardcore) PC gamers. Could you imagine what we could do if console games were compatible with PC games? I mean, just think about it. The ultimate battle between good and evil over the net. We could finally prove that PC gamers are better than console bums. Not that I have anything against consoles (*Sounds like you do* - Ed). It is just that I know that PC's are far superior. For starters we have better controls, better gameplay, better graphics, better sound - and not only that but we have a far superior mag in the form of PCPP.

John Sanderson, email.

Ah, blatant sucking will get you everywhere. At the moment, the likelihood of consoles and PC's using the same servers is cloudy. However, with games like *Quake 3: Arena* and *Half-Life* being ported to Dreamcast (which operates on a Windows CE platform) and an *Unreal* game confirmed for PlayStation 2, the possibility is becoming more plausible by the day. That said, one of the advantages of online battles amongst consoles will be that everyone is using the same hardware - creating a level playing field amongst gamers. Would they want to take on PC's using the latest hardware? Unlikely.

The slimmed-down, toned-up List

I was at the news agent today and I opened up the latest issue of PCPP (#47) and was horrified to find the score list missing. I'm not sure if this was my imagination as I didn't have much time to look through but if it is missing, could you

Byte Size

Hey, I just wanted to know. Is it normal to be to scared to play a game? I have *System Shock 2* and I really, really want to play it. So I start playing it, then I get so jumpy that I have to stop playing and I can't play it again 'cause I'm too scared.

viper119, email

It's normal to be scared. Especially as *Shodan* is out to get you. Lock your doors at night, and huddle in the corner of your bathroom with a torch. Works for us.



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Lacking in Finishing Skills

This is in reply to both Steven Stamatopoulos's letter in PCPP #46 and the comment that "few people ever actually finish games". I find end-game - or just end-level - sequences to be one of the most important parts of a game. This is probably because I am one of the few gamers I know who refuses to pirate games. When I pay \$90 for a game such as *UT* or *Thief*, I am damned well going to play it to the very end (I even played *Return to Krondor* to its amazingly boring conclusion). On the other hand, people who pick up new games every few weeks for the price of a blank CD treat the games like demos - if they don't like it, they just stop playing. There is no need to get their money's worth by persevering.

As Steven pointed out, *Half-Life*, *UT* and *Thief* hardly had exciting endings. Just compare these to something like *The Wheel of Time*, in which every cut-scene is lovingly put together and well integrated with gameplay. I finished *WoT* in two days with hardly a break, it was so compelling. With a game like *UT* however, there was no need to play the actual "Tournament" at all...the practice tournaments were just as enjoyable, and to play domination or assault you don't have to wade through the deathmatches. Steven, if you want a worthwhile ending, I really recommend *WoT*. I think anyone who has finished it, including the staff of PCPP, will agree that the ending is fulfilling... and there is a little surprise, too.

PS. In the same issue, Matt Hobbs wanted to know if there was a game which was played by a majority of girls. I don't know of any. I have found almost 10% of *WoT* players to be female,



including myself...but I have yet to meet another female gamer on a *UT* or *Q3* server. Maybe the latter is just bad luck - or maybe girls want good end sequences

Thoraiya, email

Congratulations on having the perseverance to finish a game like *Wheel Of Time*. I'll admit that I frequently don't get the end of the games I play, because I'm lucky enough to play a variety of titles - and only complete the ones that really grab me. I think that many people have been let down by the endings to some popular, epic games. After battling through *Half-Life* and the *Quake* series, people wanted more than the short cut-scene they received. That said, the final sequence is probably one of the last things completed on a game, and would you hold its release back for a feature that few will see? On the topic of female dominated games: have you considered that many gamers don't denote their gender when logging on for a fragging good game of *Q3A* or *UT*? Why would you, it doesn't change the game in any way!

please put it back or give an explanation as to why it is missing?

PS. I will still buy PCPP, I just won't like it as much

Luke Rossiter, email

Yes, the score list has changed. The major reason was that it was taking up so much room, (it was about to eat up its fourth page!). Also, many of the games in the list were not available in stores (except at *Cash Convertors*), so it wasn't really helping people with their purchasing choices. I hope you will eventually come around to liking the new score list, which has all the scores from the past year. We've even put in a 'best of every month to celebrate top-notch titles. (And the joke entry is still there!)

The Multiplayer Multiplier

When will computer programmers wake up and realise that the people who they are trying to appeal to by writing deathmatch games, are the same people who have nothing to do all day, and

have the time and the equipment to burn copies of these games and pass them round to their other deathmatching friends. Lets look at *StarSiege Tribes*. It's supposed to be one of the most heavily played games on the net in multiplayer mode. If its the most played game then maybe you guys could explain why its sales are so poor. Maybe it has got something to do with the fact that only 1 in 8 copies been used were sold legally. Good way to lose money guys! When will programmers and marketers learn that the single player community actual pay for their products and we want better levels, characters and weapons. Invent better games, not better deathmatches. We are sick of subsidising the multiplayer community!

Adrian Langowski, email

You make one excellent point. *StarSiege Tribes* had poor sales, but is popular on the net. Unfortunately, this is due to piracy. But do you really think that all the people who use multiplayer games have 'nothing

Byte Size

You know that really small hole on the side of ball point pens? What is it there for?

Matt, email

I used to think that it was so you could stick a pin in and get the ink everywhere, but apparently it is to aerate the ink. And so you don't suffocate.

to do all day' except pirate games? The rise of multiplayer option in games - and indeed the birth of online-only titles - is due to its massive popularity amongst gamers. Most who have played online have found the intelligence and strategy of humans to be far superior to that of computer-generated bots. They have a more enjoyable gaming experience as they can appreciate, learn from and even communicate with others. Maybe you should try it sometime.

The hype machine falters

Okay guys, I get it.... To highlight the ever growing problem of games being forever hyped and then not appearing on time, you decided to do the same with your web site. There I am reading the April edition and suddenly... look... the PC PowerPlay website is up, Go visit now! But type in the URL and..." server not found". Worked brilliantly, highlighted the problem really nicely... Enough already, where is the site?

Brian Holloway, email

Network next (www.networknext.com/next) is the big new gaming, music and internet site that is keeping many a boffin busy around here. As we went to press, we were assured that the www.pcpowerplay.com.au link would be up and running. It was, but unfortunately it crashed several times during our first week on newsstands. It should be fine by now, and we appreciate all the people who emailing to tell us when it was down. The site is still in it's beta stage, and lots of refinements and improvements will be made before our major launch. Feel free to test-drive the site and tell us what you think!

Video Nasties - Is that a band name?

Dear PCPP, With the recent kindergarten shooting in the US, the focus has shifted to the violence in media issue yet again. There have been calls from President Clinton to ban under-



17s from R-rated movies and for stricter censorship of movie and video media. It may only be a short time before the violence in games issue rises - yet again - as a result of the American government's 'guns don't kill people, media does' attitude. I sincerely hope this does not lead to more severe censorship of violent games or the abolition of any potential R-rating for games. As has been said before in this fine mag, further censorship could be disastrous for the games industry that we love so much. I hope that this all ends happily and the powers that be overseas and in Australia see sense in this very sad affair. Remember, games don't kill people, guns do.

John Cartwright, email

While I feel that it is unlikely that the situation in America will end 'happily', I think that most gamers would have no trouble identifying the mainstream media as having an extremely reactionary attitude to computer game violence. Ever since their popularity began, computer games have been an easy target for tabloid journalism. Take this fictional example. "He had a copy of the violent computer game 'Doom' in his room", police said in a statement today. Yeah, well he also had two shotguns and a pipe-bomb, and I

Byte Size

Am I the only one in the world who wants to dropkick that little "Bob" guy from Messiah?

Babau, email

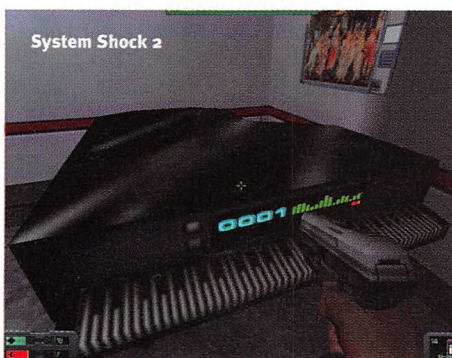
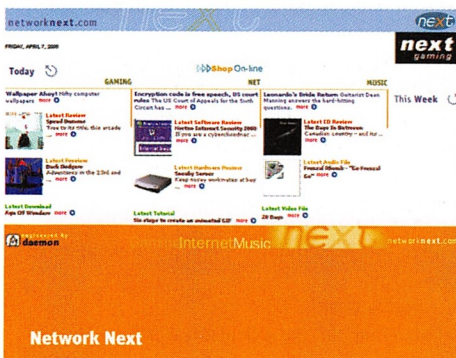
I can certainly understand the temptation. But seeing as his dad is... you know who, it's probably not the best idea.

know which items I'm more worried about. Ultimately, censorship is about protecting the community, and there is a warm ideal behind it. But recent decisions, most notably the bungled banning then reclassifying of the French film 'Romance', has suggested that the Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC) may be out of step with modern community attitudes. As always, Society always has to watch the people who are in place to watch it. Or more literally, society always has to watch the people who are paid to watch porn movies for it.

Flying, jumping, running, walking, shooting.

Greetings!

I write this letter because I'm becoming ▶



Rogue Spear



► more and more disappointed with the gaming industry. The fact is the games are not created, they are only improved. Today games are only a collection of old ideas in a new shell. Developers are not thinking of something new, they just seem to squeeze the last bits out of the established laws of the genre. Think about firstperson shooters for a second. Have they really come that far from the times of Wolfenstein 3D? Same tasks, same structure. Even the weapons are the usual collection of pistol/shotgun/rocket launcher. How about a game where you can be killed in one shot? How about a game where you are challenged not by the number of enemies but by the circumstances? Thief was a little step in that direction. But it's the same with RPGs. Why do we have to have experience points, levels and cliché magic? In the end, why do I have to play a game of one particular genre? Why can't I race on a track, then fly on a plane or walk around (shooting people of course)? Then there is more. Though your magazine is of solid quality, is there something different about you? Did you say something different in your review of FIFA 2000, for instance? No, just usual stuff. I believe you're just afraid to criticise it. (And the game is made by people who have obviously never played or watched soccer). Don't try to be objective, that's what makes the world boring.

Sergei Mushtaev, email.

I can understand the feeling of de ja vu that must enter the minds of gaming fans, everytime another formulaic run-of-the-mill game is released. But I don't think it's fair to say that developers are not thinking of new ways to engage gamers. While a game like Half-Life has - in a large, ill-fitting nutshell - the same structure as Wolfenstein 3D, you are

pulling a very long bow to suggest that they are no different. Genre-mixing games have always been a little dicey, which is why there are few if any games where you can race, fly, walk and shoot. Why not try a game like Rogue Spear, System Shock 2 or Battlezone 2 to get a well-balanced mix of genres. Oh, and if the people who make FIFA don't play or watch soccer, they are doing a more frighteningly good job than we thought. I can't even imagine how good it will be after they've spent a few hours playing kick-to-kick in the park and had a night in front of the tube!

Where's the magic gone?

My first memories of gaming were of playing my friend's Atari from when I was five or so. It was amazing. I can remember playing it for ages when he came over in school holidays. It was incredible. Games like Frogger had me captivated especially Pitfall. From then on I had always enjoyed games. I didn't care what system they were on. I just wanted to play, mainly because I never had any sort of computer or console until I was much older. I was always playing on someone else's. I played on C64, Sega Master System, NES, SNES, Sega Megadrive and Amiga. Eventually my dad got a PC for work but he hardly used it and I would always play the same handful of shareware games over and over. Games like the Commander Keen Series, Duke Nukem and Jill of the Jungle.

Back then the games were magic, they were special. They had been everything I'd hoped to be and more. In '96 the family finally bought a reasonably up to date PC (P100, SVGA, soundcard). I was amazed and astounded by games of up to four years earlier. Games that wouldn't run back then on the old 386 EGA, I

Byte Size

For those that aren't used to reading: Ed is the abbreviation for an editors note.

Echuca, email

That's basically correct. (Basically! - Ed).

could now enjoy in VGA with sound on my current PC as I played Doom and Wolfenstein for the first time as well as many Apogee shareware games, such as Wacky Wheels and other games like Jazz Jackrabbit. I also enjoyed immensely the current games I got off of the CD of my first copy of PCPP, #3. I am a happy subscriber.

Then somehow the games lost their magic after that year. They were still great fun, but there was never that incredible fulfilment that was previously there. They seemed to have lost their spark. I remember reading the hype of great games sure to amaze and astound me, like Unreal and Mario 64. I have both of these games now and they really are great, but they're not what I had hoped to be. I think the last games I played that were magic were Quake and Curse of Monkey Island. But Monkey Island is only fun the second time around if you get amnesia and Quake loses it's magic with time as do all other games.

I can still play those old magic games and reminisce what the magic was like the first time I played them. It brings back sweet memories of gaming nirvana. I still play today on my very own PC, but the games are without magic, maybe I just got older and grew up. Now I search for the game that will bring back the magic, be more than I had hoped.

Do yourself a favour. Find an older game that you haven't played before, or play an old favourite. See if the magic is there or if you can remember it.

**Ewan Wood
Millicent, SA**

There are two conceivable reasons for all this disgusting nostalgia, Ewan. One, you're turning into a grumpy, cynical, old bastard. Or, two, as you get older you just become a more discerning gamer. And - hey - there's nothing wrong with becoming fussier when it comes to being impressed by games.

Byte Size

In response to Walt Disney's "where's the feet?" byte-size question (PCPP #47) I can point out this example in the truly atrocious "Trespasser" a few years back. Cleavage. The most agreeable part of the game was the expanse of cleavage when you looked down. Certainly more agreeable than feet.

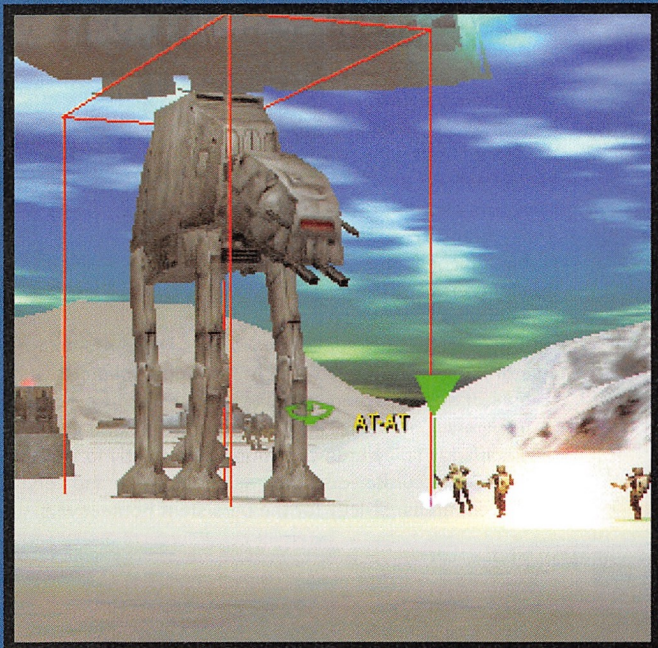
Scott, email

That's true. But the lack of feet is still a worry.

COMPETITIONS

FORCE COMMANDER

5 COPIES OF THE GAME



Force Commander combines two of our favourite things - realtime strategy and the Star Wars universe. Force Commander's story line intersects with some of the greatest moments in Star Wars' epic timeline. The game begins just prior to the Empire's search for the droids in Star Wars: A New Hope and ends after Return of the Jedi. Along the way, players will experience first-hand the decisive Battle of Hoth from The Empire Strikes Back, plus several new locations and conflicts created exclusively for the game. The realtime nature of the game, coupled with a classic Star Wars story, offers fans the chance to truly "live the saga". And yes, there are AT-AT's!

Q: Who is the actor behind Boba Fett?

WHERE TO SEND

Write the answer, along with your name and address on the back of an envelope. Tip: Don't forget to put the competition name on the front of the envelope.

All entries close May 23rd.

Send to:

<competition name>

PC PowerPlay

78 Renwick St.

Redfern NSW, 2016

ISSUE 47 WINNERS

GALAXY QUEST

Q. From what novel did Sigourney Weaver get her stage name?

A. The Great Gatsby

R. Pervan, Morningside QLD

D. Ali, Glandore SA

G. Blayney, Casula NSW

L. Peters, New Farm QLD

S. Baxter, Annerley QLD

T. Brindley, Hawthorne QLD

A. Tolman, Wembley WA

T. Masterton, Pyrmont NSW

A. Petrushevski, Moonah TAS

M. Masci, Kangaroo Point QLD

THE SIMS

Q. In 50 words or less, what is the meaning of life?

A. A couple of our favourite answers;

- The state or quality that distinguishes living beings from the dead, characterised chiefly by metabolism, growth and the ability to reproduce or respond to stimuli.

- The Meaning Of Life is a film by Monty Python ñ Made in 1983, it did quite well at Cannes.

- As Alpha Centauri's Chairman Yang would say: "Life's fundamental meaning is life itself."

- Many great philosophers, from Socrates to Monty Python have discussed the meaning of life.

Unfortunately, I think we can never find out what the true meaning is, at least while we are still alive. Such is life. Shit happens. Count the words.

T. Butler, Dongarra WA

Z. Woodward, Carlton River TAS

E. Rajasingham, Middle Park QLD

E. Fearin, Carlingford NSW

K. Beattie, Bacchus Marsh VIC

R. Hunter, Alice Springs NT

SEPTERRA CORE

Q. Septerra consists of how many worlds?

A. Septerra is one world with seven layers of continents (called World Shells) orbiting the Core (an immense bio-computer).

M. Lai, Embleton WA

T. Lam, Waterloo NSW

C. Coulthard, Hawker SA

W. McConnell, Ultimo NSW

J. Chen, Mosman NSW

SCORELIST QUIZ #47

Sam Carpenter, Townsville QLD wins a copy of Age of Empires II

STARLANCER

5 COPIES OF THE GAME

StarLancer, the latest game from hot studio Digital Anvil, combines the intense action of firstperson space combat with the drama and intrigue of a classic WWII air combat movie. Countries from around the world have formed strategic alliances and now battle for control of Earth, Mars and other planets across the solar system. You are part of a newly formed, ragtag aviation unit, the 45th Volunteers Squadron. If you choose to accept the challenge you must prove yourself and earn the respect of your peers.

With brilliant gameplay and a phenomenal attention to detail, StarLancer is one of the hottest space-shooters around.

Q: What would you forge on a Digital Anvil?



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

5 COPIES OF THE GAME

Do you have what it takes to be a mercenary soldier? Are you up to it? Now you can find out. With Soldier of Fortune, your mission is clear: survive. You must track your prey across the globe in over 30 bad-ass secret missions, to take down a fanatical terrorist organization. With brutally realistic weapons and effects, it's important to always maintain your cover. You'll be asked to complete missions ranging from underhanded sabotage to stealthy assassination to full frontal assaults. Welcome to the secret world of the mercenary. Soldier of Fortune delivers some of the most realistic, covert-operative shooting action around.

Q: Kirby first appeared on which console?

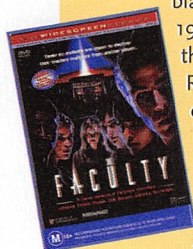


dvd

The Faculty

M15+, Roadshow

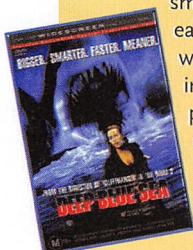
■ Following the current fad of new films self-consciously referencing old films, *The Faculty* blatantly rips off the 1956 classic 'Invasion of the Bodysnatchers'. Robert Rodriguez directs this so-so teen-horror about a group of students attempting to uncover and thwart the alien invasion of their school. Typically, the teachers are the bad guys - OR ARE THEY?! Features interviews, behind-the-scenes sequences and an entirely predictable story.



Deep Blue Sea

M15+, Roadshow

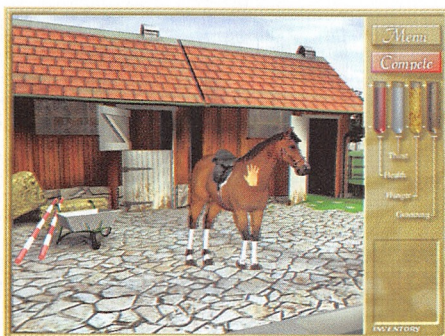
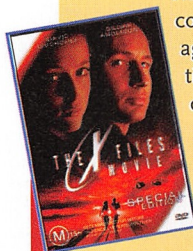
■ Aaargh! Sharks! Last year's blockbuster about what happens when genetically altered sharks get smart. That is, they still eat people, but do so with cunning and intent! Absolutely preposterous, but fun nonetheless. A wealth of bonuses feature on this disc, including cut scenes, making-of feature, special effects doco and commentary by Sam Jackson (funny) and director Renny Harlin (boring and technical).



The X-Files Movie

M15+, Roadshow

■ Series writer Chris Carter and director Rob Bowman have done an admirable job of transferring the hit TV show onto the big screen. Mulder and Skully take on the alien conspirators once again, though this time the big budget can do justice to the grand scope of the story. At times *The X-Files Movie* feels a bit dumbed-down for the new audience, but fans of the series should still be satisfied. Includes a making-of featurette, trailer and commentary.



Heath Ryan's Riding Star

THE PREVIOUS HORSE WAS STRUCK LAME - SO HERE'S ANOTHER ONE

■ At first glance it may seem there's a new equestrian game on the market, but basically this is a rehashed version of *Riding Star* with a Big Name attached. Not much in terms of gameplay has changed, with the exception of a few new features in the multiplayer side of things. Choose from eight "stunning different colours of horses" when you play against up to four of your friends. Gameplay is still hard to master, and getting disqualified is still all-too common - due mostly to the purportedly accurate equestrian scoring system and very tight event areas. Strictly for the persistent horse-lovers.



The show-jumping bit is strangely compelling.

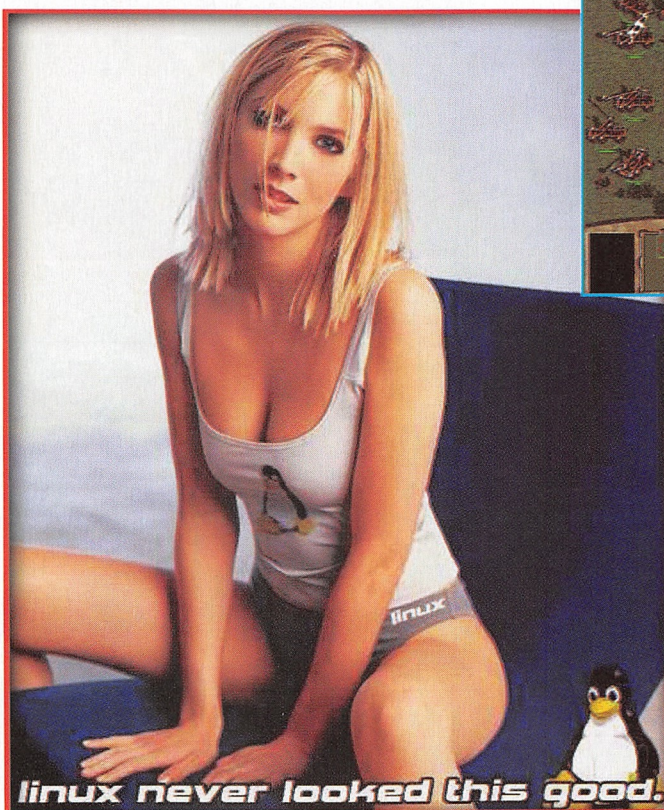


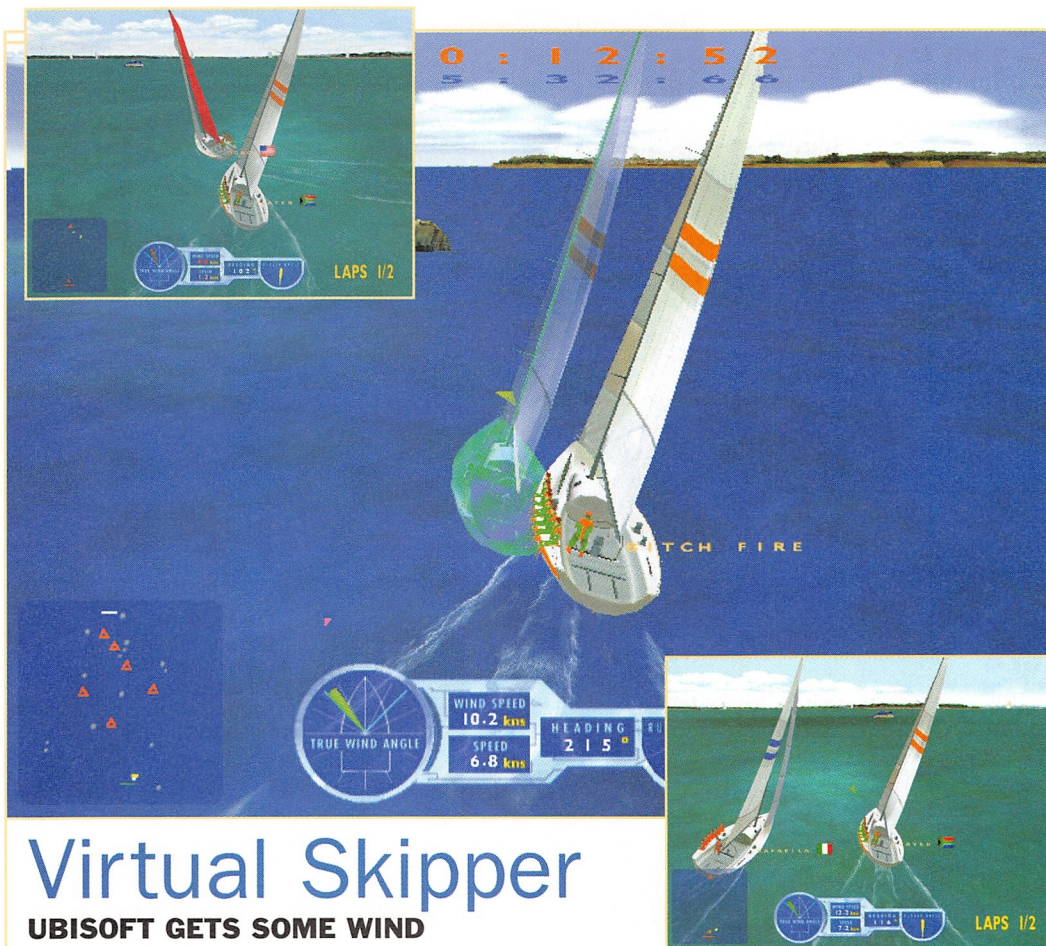
Moo!

Our award for the best screenshot of the month goes to *Warlords: Battlecry*. Nothing could better strike fear into an enemy than a phalanx of cow-laden catapults.

Phwooar!

Linux has long been the OS of choice for the hardcore geek. Now it seems the push is on to get it to step out from the shadow of the vastly more popular Windows. Here it is then: the all-new and improved SEXY Linux! There's a free g-string with every copy sold.





Virtual Skipper

UBISOFT GETS SOME WIND

■ As the title suggests, Virtual Skipper is a delightfully thorough sailing simulation. A typical race will take at least 8 minutes to complete. Virtual skipper gives you a choice of three different boats to sail and master, and a training area with a ghost ship to follow and try to best. The graphics are quite good, with excellent wave representation. Relaxing presentation aside, Virtual Skipper can be quite intimidating to those not to familiar with the nitty gritty of sailing in a regatta.

Games we'd love to see on PC

No.3: Tony Hawk Skateboarding (PSX)

■ For those who aren't aware, Tony Hawk is the Michael Jordan of skateboarding, the Maradona of the plank on wheels. The only man to ever land a 9000 (yes, that's two and a half full rotations) is at the top of his game - and has decided to lend his name to one. Thankfully, the game he has supervised and promoted is a fitting tribute to his skill. With lightning fast control, slick animations and addictive gameplay, Tony Hawk Skateboarding on PlayStation was one of 1999's top-sellers and took out many 'game of the year' polls.

The good news is that the sequel will be coming to PC later this year. Tony Hawk Skateboarding 2 will feature new players, tricks, and even more real-world locations where you can kick it out.

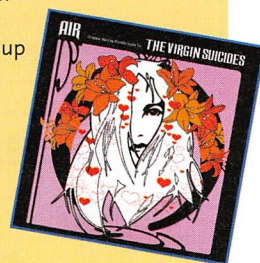


cd

Air

"The Virgin Suicides OST"
(Record Makers)

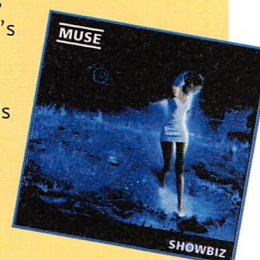
■ French band Air return with a more sombre, elegiac companion to the bachelor pad electronica of 1998's Moon Safari. It doesn't live up to its name, though; you might slit your wrists, but it is great sex music.



Muse

"Showbiz"
(Mushroom)

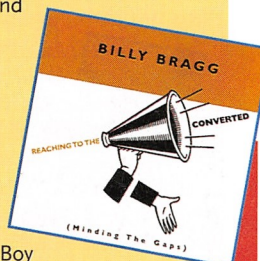
■ These three young lads from the UK have propelled themselves into the rock n' roll spotlight using a carbon copy of Radiohead's Thom Yorke's vocal style. Voice aside, Showbiz fails to gain momentum after the stunning opener 'Sunburn', and instead propels listeners through pop-rock mediocrity for the remainder.



Billy Bragg

"Reaching to the Converted"
(?????)

■ Who's been at the forefront of pop music for the last 20 years? Billy Bragg and his cohorts. This album presents studio versions of some all-time classics (like Shirley, Boy Done Good) and some lesser known B-sides. Winner for the socialists of the heart!



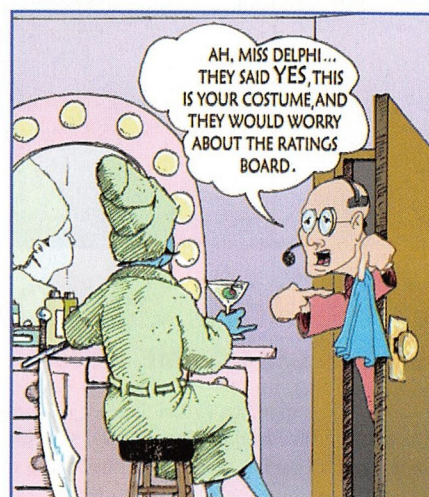
Pages of Empires

IT'S A STRATEGY GUIDE - WITH A TWIST!

■ As the user-created mod scene continues to grow, we're sure to see an increasing number of books like this one. Published by Sybex, the Age of Empires II: Official Scenario Design Toolkit is a comprehensive guide to the map editor that shipped with Ensemble's now classic realtime strategy game. Chapters include advice on creating authentic maps with real world terrain, how to populate and balance a battlefield with resources and units, and tips on tinkering with the game's artificial intelligence. The package also comes with a CD featuring graphic and sound files as well as AI scripts and map templates.



Delphi after an all night work session



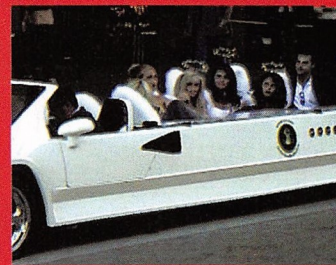
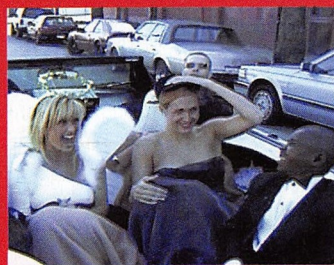
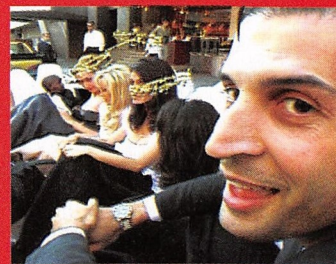
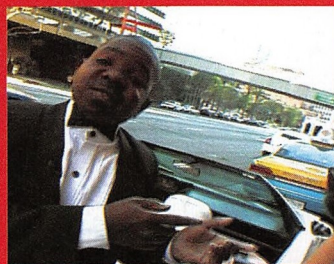
Not on deadline

■ Fans of Planet Moon's kaleidoscopic and much-delayed Giants will enjoy this series of cartoons by Shawn Nelson, the game's lead animator. Just goes to show that you can still have fun even when your game is eighteen months late.

www.planetmooncentral.com/cartoons/cartoons.shtml

Gary, Dave & Oscar

Let it never be said that Shiny doesn't know how to celebrate in style. With Messiah finally hitting the retail stores in late March, Dave Perry decided to have an impromptu launch party at the Oscars. Accompanied by former Diff'rent Strokes star Gary Coleman - and, heck, why not? - Perry and the Shiny crew were escorted to and from Hollywood's most vulgar night in a preposterous stretch Lamborghini limousine. Yet as funny as it might sound, those photos look a tad suspicious to us.



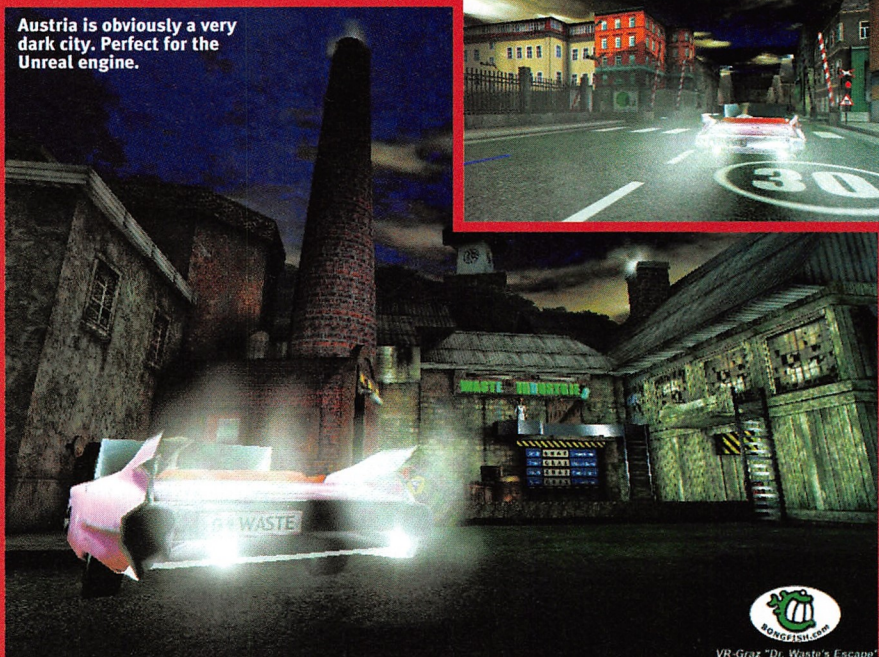
Unreal Sightseeing

VISIT AUSTRIA VIRTUALLY, THANKS TO EPIC

■ Taken from a virtual reality demo to be exhibited at the World Expo 2000 in Germany, these pictures of a recreation of the Austrian city of Graz are indicative of the power and versatility inherent within Epic's Unreal engine. Apparently it took three monster projection screens and a custom built controller to experience properly. Impressive stuff. We're still awaiting a Quake 3 deathmatch level set in Surry Hills, though.



Austria is obviously a very dark city. Perfect for the Unreal engine.

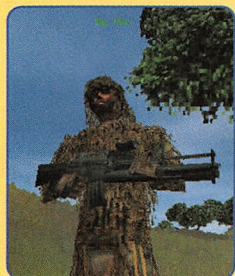


VR-Graz "Dr. Waste's Escape"

Land Warrior

US ARMY GIVES VOXELS THE THUMBS UP

■ Novalogic's Delta Force series may have been criticised in some quarters for its lack of realism, but that has failed to deter the US Army's interest in the tactical shooter. As part of its Land Warrior initiative, the US Army has asked Novalogic to modify Delta Force 2 to assist the good ol'



American GI. Training with the reworked version of the game will apparently enable soldiers to get to grips with techy new stuff like a Global Positioning System and helmet-mounted LCD. However, we remain unconvinced of the benefits wiggling a mouse might have for anyone's capacity to fire a gun.



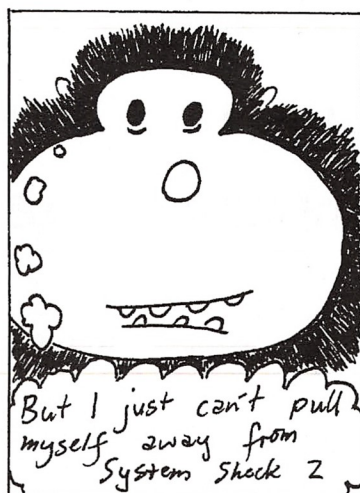
Runic Roleplaying

BE A BIG, BEEFY BLOKE WITH AN AXE, AGAIN

■ Human Head's excursion into the bloodier aspects of Norse mythology looks set to be a rather fine action game. So it comes as quite a surprise to hear that it's also going to become a pen and paper roleplaying game. Atlas Games has been given the task of translating the adventures of Ragnar into something palatable to the table-top RPG player. Robin D. Laws - of Feng Shui and Hero Wars fame - will guide the project to a release later this year shortly after Human Head finishes its version.

TONY the Reviewing Monkey is "On Deadline!!"

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Next month

PC PowerPlay

cordially invites you to join:

Duke Nukem

Blizzard

Chris Roberts

John Romero

Warren Spector

Ratbag

Westwood

Bill Gates

Derek Smart

and Peter Costello!

As we celebrate our
50th anniversary issue!

PCPP #50 on sale May 31, 2000



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